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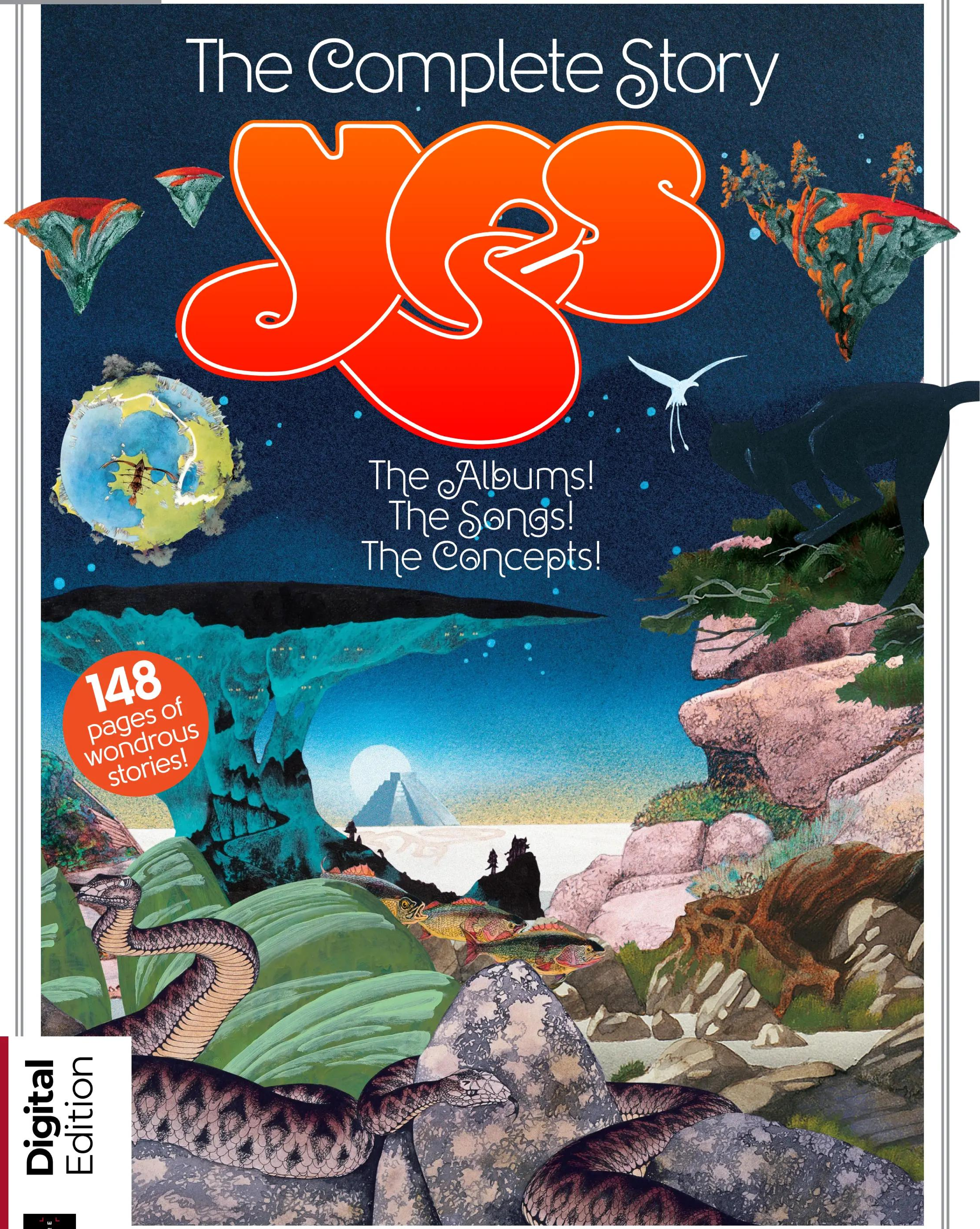

The Complete Story

YES

The Albums!
The Songs!
The Concepts!

148 pages of wondrous stories!

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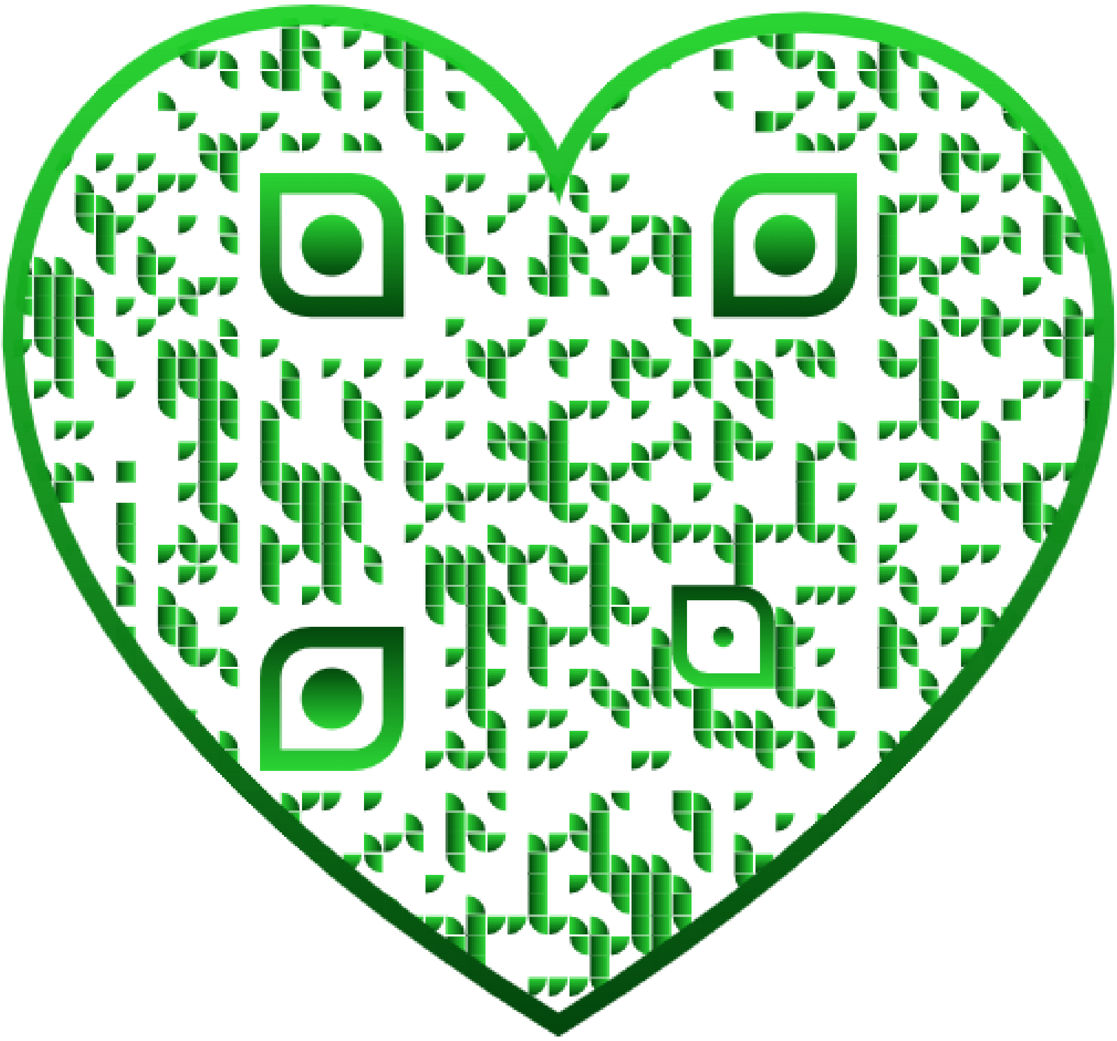

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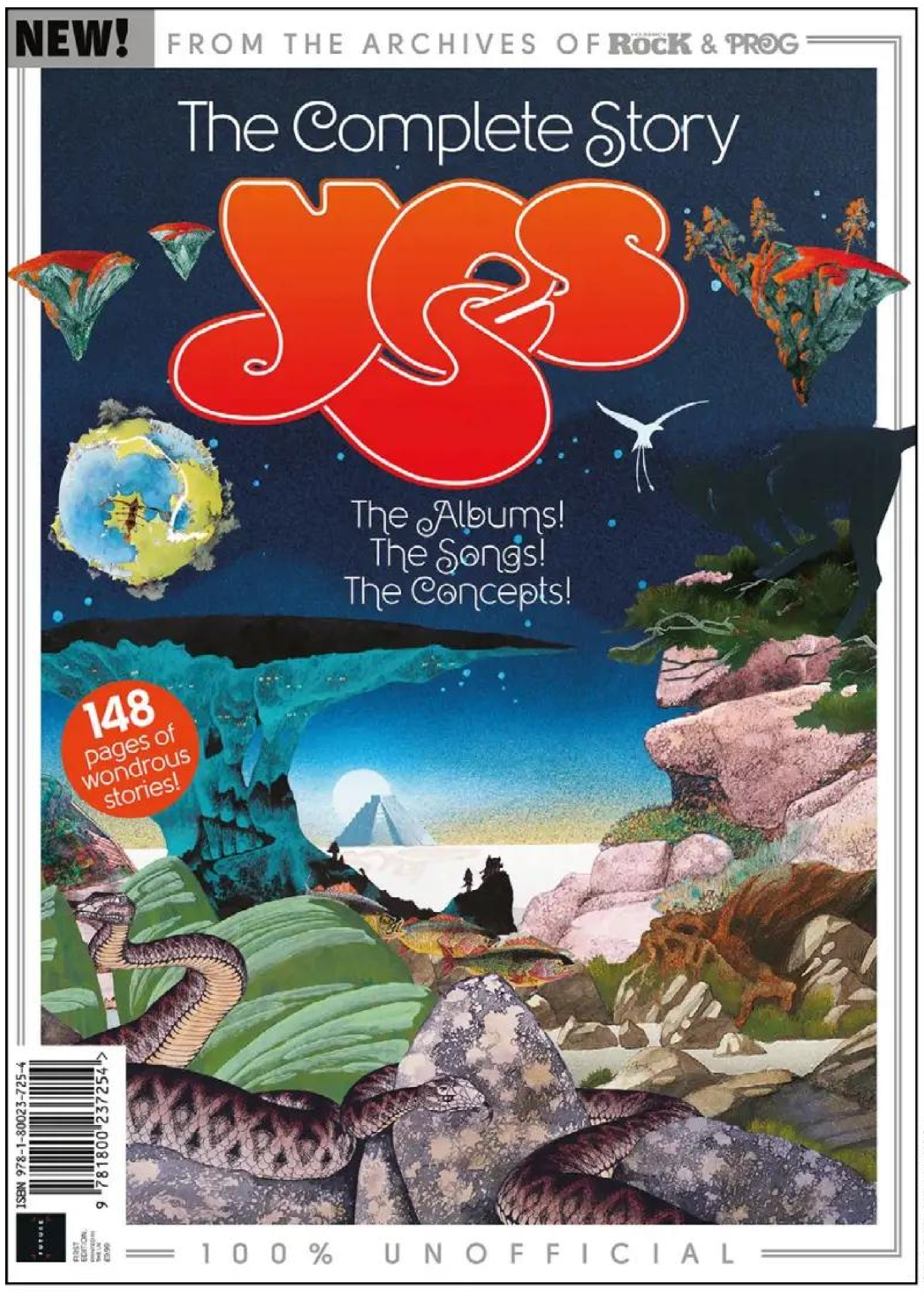

NEW! FROM THE ARCHIVES OF ROCK & PROG
The Complete Story
Yes
The Albums! The Songs! The Concepts!
148 pages of wondrous stories!
100% UNOFFICIAL

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There has never been a band like Yes. Not only are they one of the biggest prog acts in history, but they did more than most to expand the vocabulary of rock'n'roll. In their hands, it took on the scope and ambition of classical music and jazz. The fact they did all of that while seemingly hiring and firing new members every week makes it even more remarkable.

Of course, if you're reading this, you'll know all that. You'll also know that the band have never been given the respect they deserve from the mainstream music industry – despite selling millions of albums, notching up several hit singles and packing out huge arenas for more than 50 years, they've been ignored and misunderstood for most of their career.

This special magazine is an antidote to all that – it's a 148-page celebration of all things Yes. Inside you'll find the very best articles and interviews from the pages of *Prog* and *Classic Rock* magazines. From the making of such landmark albums as *Fragile, Close To The Edge, Tales From Topographic Oceans* and *90125,* to up-close-and-personal interviews with Jon Anderson, Steve Howe, Rick Wakeman and the late, great Chris Squire, it's a suitably epic tribute to one of the most influential prog bands of all time. Throw in the 40 Greatest Yes Songs Ever, and this is everything a Yes fan could want.

So go on, crank up *Close To The Edge* and immerse yourself in the career of a band like no other. And if you ever find out what on earth *Siberian Khatru* is about, let us know…

Dave

Dave Everley - Editor

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MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

“Yes bore no resemblance to anything else that was about at the time and I thought, ‘Shit, this is going to be a great band.’”

Rick Wakeman

Starship Troopers

Fifty years ago, **Yes** unexpectedly discovered the path to stardom and embarked on a magical journey that led to them becoming one of the biggest progressive rock bands in the world. *Prog* invites Bill Bruford, Tony Kaye, Rick Wakeman, Steve Howe, Phil Franks and Roger Dean to explore the journey up to and beyond the band's annus mirabilis: 1971.

Words: Sid Smith
Images: Ron Howard/Redferns/Getty Images

On the morning that *Prog* speaks to Rick Wakeman, the veteran keyboard player is in a very good mood and about as far removed from his 'Grumpy Old Rick' Twitter handle as is possible to imagine. The reason? "I'm going to get my [Covid vaccine] jab this morning," he says with some enthusiasm. It's also possible another reason the 71-year-old is so chipper is that he's talking about the events of 1971, a year that saw his career coincidentally given a massive shot in the arm after joining Yes.

In February 1971, *The Yes Album* was released and, nine months later, *Fragile*: two remarkable albums representing the survival and arrival of a progressive rock institution. The first secured their future, protecting them from the whims of record label executives. The second was a new integrated unit marching in lockstep that defined their own destiny on their own terms. Both records were, in part, the result of a catalyst; two new members whose contributions brought about a decisive change. Both enabled Yes to finally slip into another league entirely after nearly three years of commercial stalemate and the looming threat of obscurity.

Taken together, those two albums last a little over 81 minutes and stand as a testament to tenacity, decisiveness, and a remarkable flowering of creativity. With them, the transition from earnest hopefuls to bona fide stars was achieved. Yes would soon be able to say goodbye to gigs at Portsmouth Poly and bask in FM Radio's heavy rotation in sun-drenched California and beyond.

"It was a great period. A time of tour, record and tour some more… it was another level… everybody was playing in a way they'd never played before," recalls Wakeman, an astonished tone animating his voice, as if he still can't quite believe his luck.

"Being in a band is sometimes like being in a family, you know, you're living cheek by jowl especially in the early days of the group, and plenty of bands have had problems dealing with each other possibly because it is that family thing," says Yes' first keyboard player, Tony Kaye, speaking from his home in Florida.

In any family, there will be times of joy, excitement, disappointments, and loss. Alongside the support, respect and regard between siblings, thorny rivalries may grow, some left unresolved, or even undeclared for decades. Resentment for sleights, both real and imagined, unfurl in the undergrowth and along the branches of the family tree. Like some pernicious knotweed, they slowly choke the life, trust and joy out of their interactions.

Tony Kaye, reflecting on the band he helped to found in 1968 and which he first left in 1971, experienced all this, and probably more internecine adventures than he cares to remember or talk about. Yet Kaye's enduring enthusiasm for the group is such that he returned to the family fold for 1983's *90125* and once again in 2018 as a guest on the 50th anniversary tour.

GEORGE WILKES/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

> "I'd seen Steve Howe playing with Bodast probably on one of my visits to Speakeasy and I remember telling Chris and Jon I thought he would make a good replacement for Peter Banks."
> **Tony Kaye**

Yes are now a firmly established musical dynasty with a fanbase broad and deep-pocketed enough to sustain two different groupings, not only in the late-80s with Yes versus AWBH but again around the 50th anniversary with Yes running alongside Yes Featuring Anderson Rabin Wakeman (aka ARW). None of that and none of what's been achieved over the last five decades and more could have possible had it not been for Yes' very own annus mirabilis in 1971. The events that made 1971 so vital to Yes' success had their origins in the previous year, and even go back further back.

In truth, 'overnight success' doesn't really exist. Yes had slogged away paying their dues in thankless support gigs including, most famously perhaps, Cream's farewell concert at the Royal Albert Hall in November 1968. "I think we kind of took it in our stride," says Kaye. "Obviously, it was a pretty big deal for the band. We certainly weren't very popular at that time. I guess it was between our manager Roy Flynn and Robert Stigwood who managed Cream to swing that for the band. And of course, yes, it was a bit intimidating."

Yes' eponymous debut album, released in 1969.

Just how intimidating was seared into the then 19-year-old Bill Bruford's memory after dropping a stick in the opening moments of their cover of Leonard Bernstein's *Something's Coming* from *West Side Story*. There, literally in the shadow of Ginger Baker's huge Ludwig double bass drums, he lost his

Yes in August 1969, L-R: Chris Squire, Jon Anderson, Tony Kaye, Peter Banks, Bill Bruford.

grip on his stick. "I can assure you, the sound of a drumstick clattering and rattling down over a bass drum to the hard wooden floor of a silent and packed Albert Hall is absolutely the loudest sound I shall ever hear," he'd later write.

For Kaye, further embarrassments are brought to mind. He laughs when he remembers his early career. "I used to try and disguise my Vox Continental with a three-sided wooden plyboard stand that was laid around the front so it looked a little more like a Hammond. It was pretty bad," he admits.

Although barely known beyond a rat run of college gigs and clubs, Yes were signed to Atlantic Records, which conferred both status and prestige on this band of hustlers living in communal near-penury. "Being on Atlantic lifted the band to another level," agrees Kaye, relishing the freedom the band experienced in the making of the album. "I guess it was specific to that particular time that they kind of let us do whatever we wanted to do, you know? You don't really see that anymore."

Released in the summer of 1969, the band's self-titled debut album was housed in a striking comic book speech bubble and delivered a simple but effective graphic impact. As Yes grew in stature, such illustrations would become more elaborate and, to some extent, echo the complexity of the music. Musically, the band could sometimes be heard punching above their weight and this established quite early on another aspect of their personality. Despite their winning formula, not enough people went out and bought the album and it failed to reach the UK Top 40. Fortunately in those days, that didn't matter too much as record labels were often prepared to give bands longer to find out what worked best. For now, Atlantic were happy.

On their 1970 follow-up *Time And A Word,* Yes needed to try something else. Maintaining a steady-as-she-goes course wasn't something that singer Jon Anderson was content with when it came to recording their second album. Not for nothing did the frontman pick up the nickname 'Napoleon' from his bandmates due to his small stature and autocratic tendencies. If their debut had been a good calling card for Yes the next album had to be better, Anderson argued. There wasno point in treading water and simply repeating the formula that worked well enough the first time around. Adding an orchestra might help that process imbuing the songs with an added sparkle.

Recording sessions were grabbed in between gigs during the winter of 1969 and early 1970 at Advision Studios, but as the songs became upholstered with a string and brass trimming, guitarist Peter Banks was at odds with his colleagues over the direction. Personal differences between Banks and producer Tony Colton only increased the tension.

Used to being the centre of attention onstage, Banks' misgivings about being sidelined in the studio were a source of grief. He felt the mix didn't always pay him as much attention as he would have liked and, although he didn't know it at the time, he was establishing a disputatious template that would accompany most of Yes' album mixing sessions. In the years to come, individuals would variously demand more bass, more keyboards, more guitar, more drums, more voice, and, well, just more. Regardless of Banks' displeasure with the finished album, there are plenty of moments where his thunder, far from being stolen, is well to the fore. The frantic free-falling solo during their inspired version of Buffalo Springfield's *Everydays,* a cover that far outstrips the laconic original, demonstrates Banks' brand of dazzling bravery that veers between frenzied excitement and reckless abandonment.

Yes have since garnered a reputation for being ruthless when dealing with personnel issues over the years, ousting members or managers with the ease by which one might slip off a burdensome overcoat that no longer fits. What do you do when someone in the band isn't keen on the proposed direction? Most of the time that band will make compromises and accommodations to avoid conflict but when that doesn't work, what then?

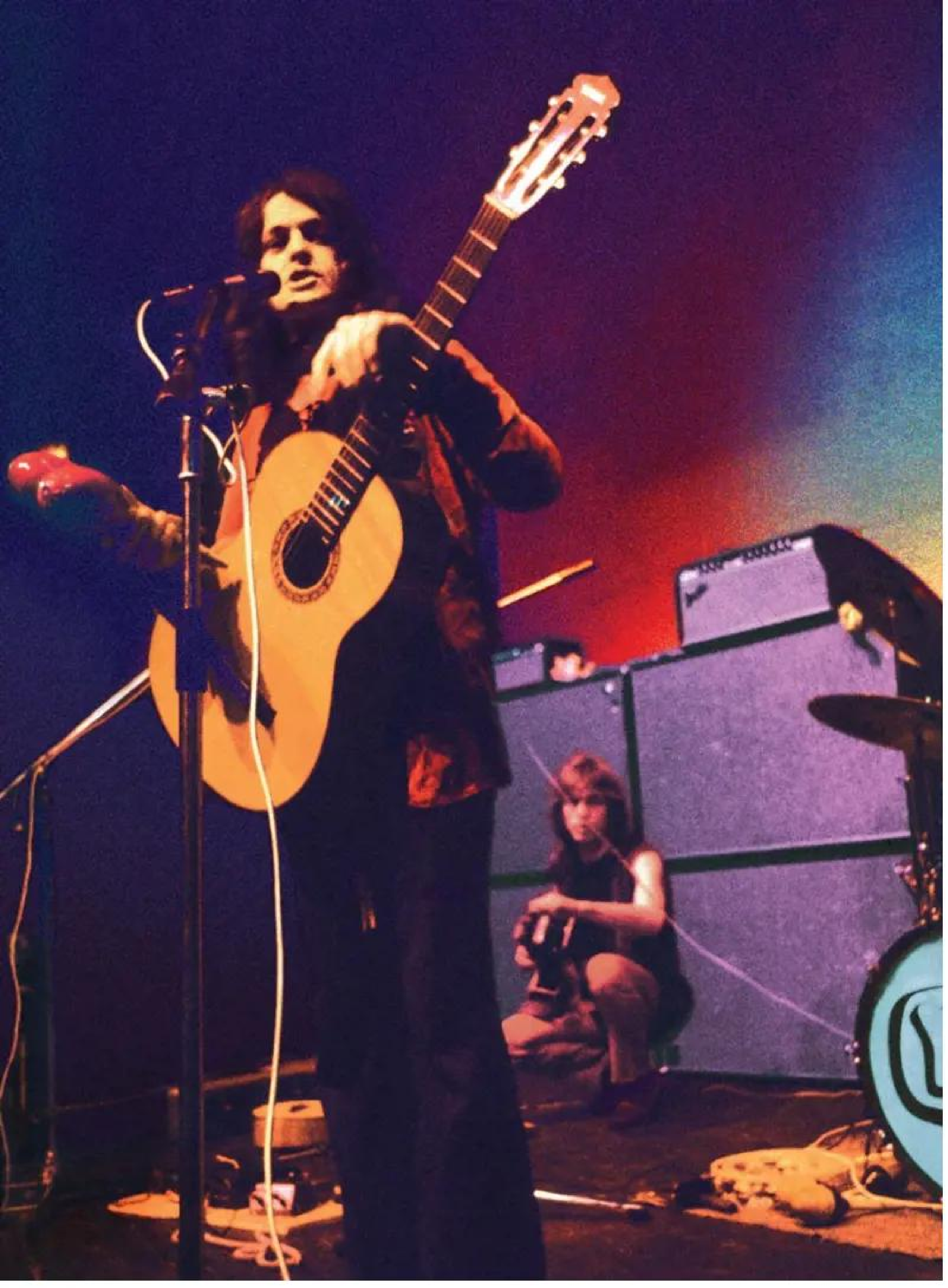
Just two months after the completion of *Time And A Word* the answer to those questions came at the end of a gig in Luton on April 18, 1970. The band were backstage when Anderson and Squire told Banks he was out. Tony Kaye claims today that the precise reasons for Banks' sacking in 1970 remain a mystery to him and that neither he nor Bruford was even aware it was coming.

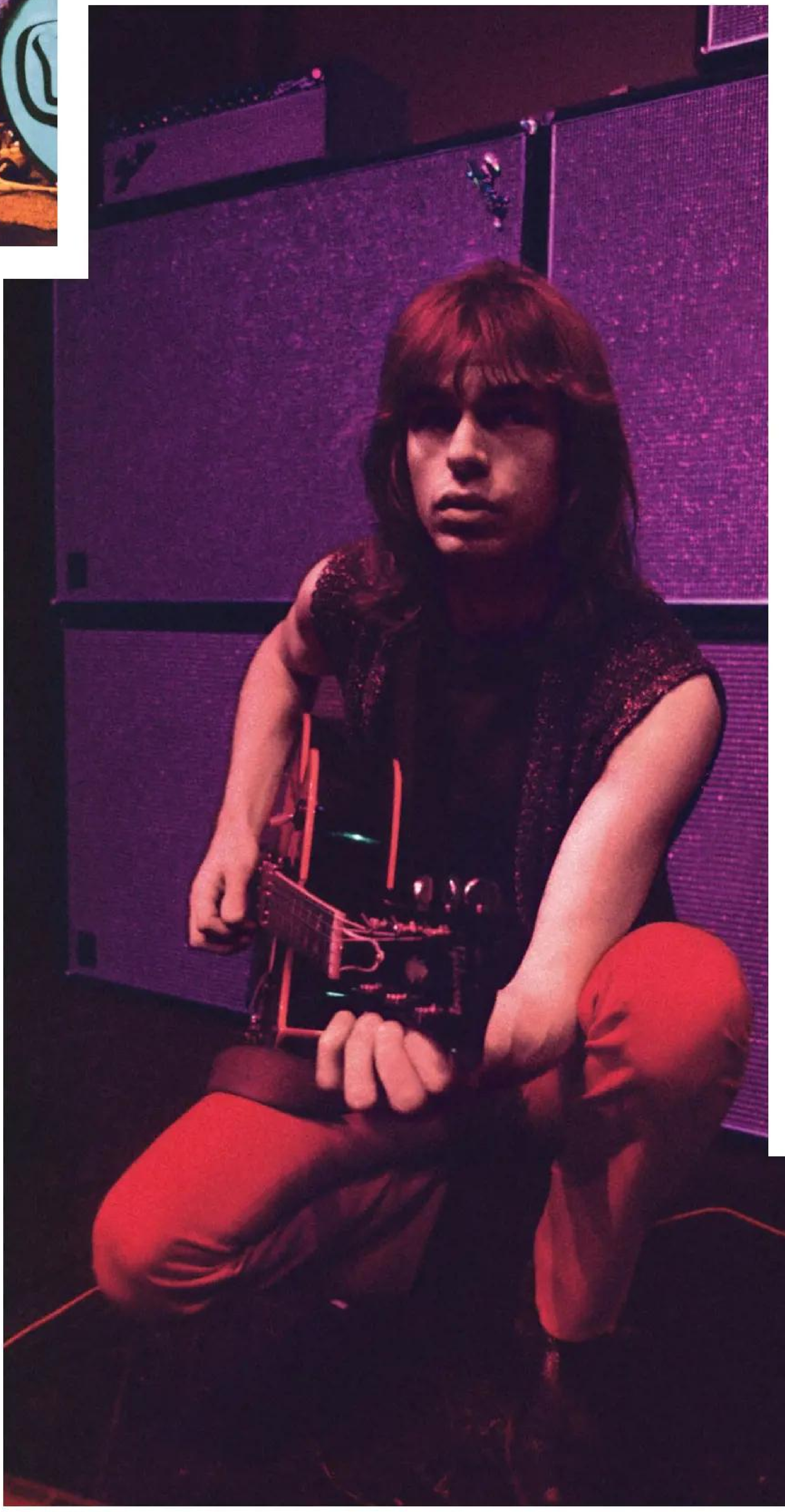
Vested interest: Tony Kaye onstage in London.

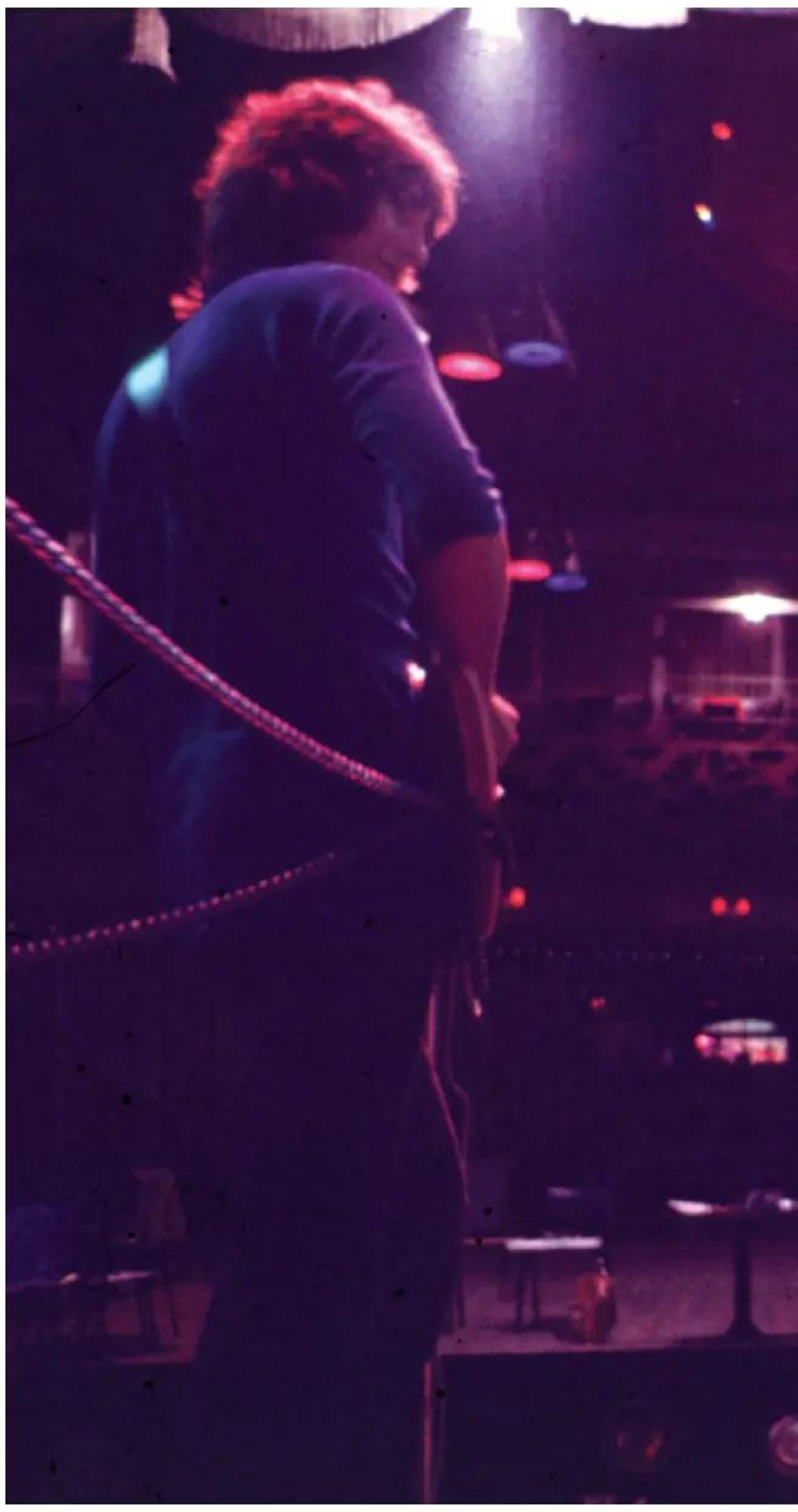
MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

***Time And A Word*, 1970.**

TIME AND A WORD/YES







Phil Franks' shots of Yes soundchecking at the Lyceum ahead of the album shoot in 1971.

"Pete was a top guitarist. He loved Pete Townshend and he loved that kind of extreme, loud rock'n'roll," he recalls, "I recently saw some old videos of that time and both of us, we were pretty energetic… Pete was putting his guitar through the ceiling on certain club stages and just kind of doing a Townshend thing. I never really understood at the time why he was fired. It wasn't really explained, but I guess in retrospect that had something to do with it: the band wanted something different I guess. Pete was not very enthusiastic about the orchestral addition and it was something that Jon was very into. And of course, the band went in that direction but it wasn't really my direction either. I thought it was a good combo that the band had together at that time but it was not to be."

Finding a suitable new guitarist wasn't the only problem Yes were facing. Although *Time And Word* had scraped in the lower end of the charts it hadn't really made much of a difference to the band's prospects. "There'd been nothing but big promises about how great we were going to be, but we were going round and round in ever-smaller circles. The gigs weren't getting much better and we were running out of money. We were signed at the same time as Led Zeppelin and they were doing pretty well and King Crimson had this astonishing first album, we were just knocked backwards by that and jealous as heck. There we were in our little damp farmhouse with 50 quid [to our name]. That was two and half years or something into the band's life and we'd singly failed to produce," says Bruford summing up the prevailing mood.

Having a vision and acting upon it requires a significant degree of commitment. In parting company with Peter Banks so suddenly, so decisively, Yes had displayed a willingness to do whatever it would take to make that vision a reality. There wasn't really any room for passengers. It was that simple.

"Bodast were a rockin' band," recalls Tony Kaye. "I'd seen Steve Howe playing with them probably on one of my visits to [London music venue] Speakeasy and I remember telling Chris and Jon I thought he would make a good replacement for Peter Banks."

Kaye was right. In Steve Howe, they had found a guitarist who brought another level of technical skill and compositional flair to the group. However, perhaps most importantly of all, Howe wasn't interested in any old gig to tide him over. "Basically, I was very hungry for success and extremely ambitious. I was 23 when I joined, so

> “Everything was always just in the nick of time with Yes. We only just got to the gig in the nick of time, only just got a new manager in the nick of time, you know? It was all but over. People have forgotten just how critical a time it was then.”
>
> **Bill Bruford**

I guess I was in a new place because my son, Dylan, had just been born so that was really a kind of wake-up call. So I suddenly had so many reasons to want to give my best to my work, for my family really.”

Reasoning that he’d upped his game touring as part of PP Arnold’s backing band, where on the Delaney And Bonnie tour he’d rubbed shoulders with Eric Clapton and George Harrison, Howe was looking for a group that were equal to his ambition. In meeting Yes, he knew he’d found them. What he didn’t know was how precarious their future actually was.

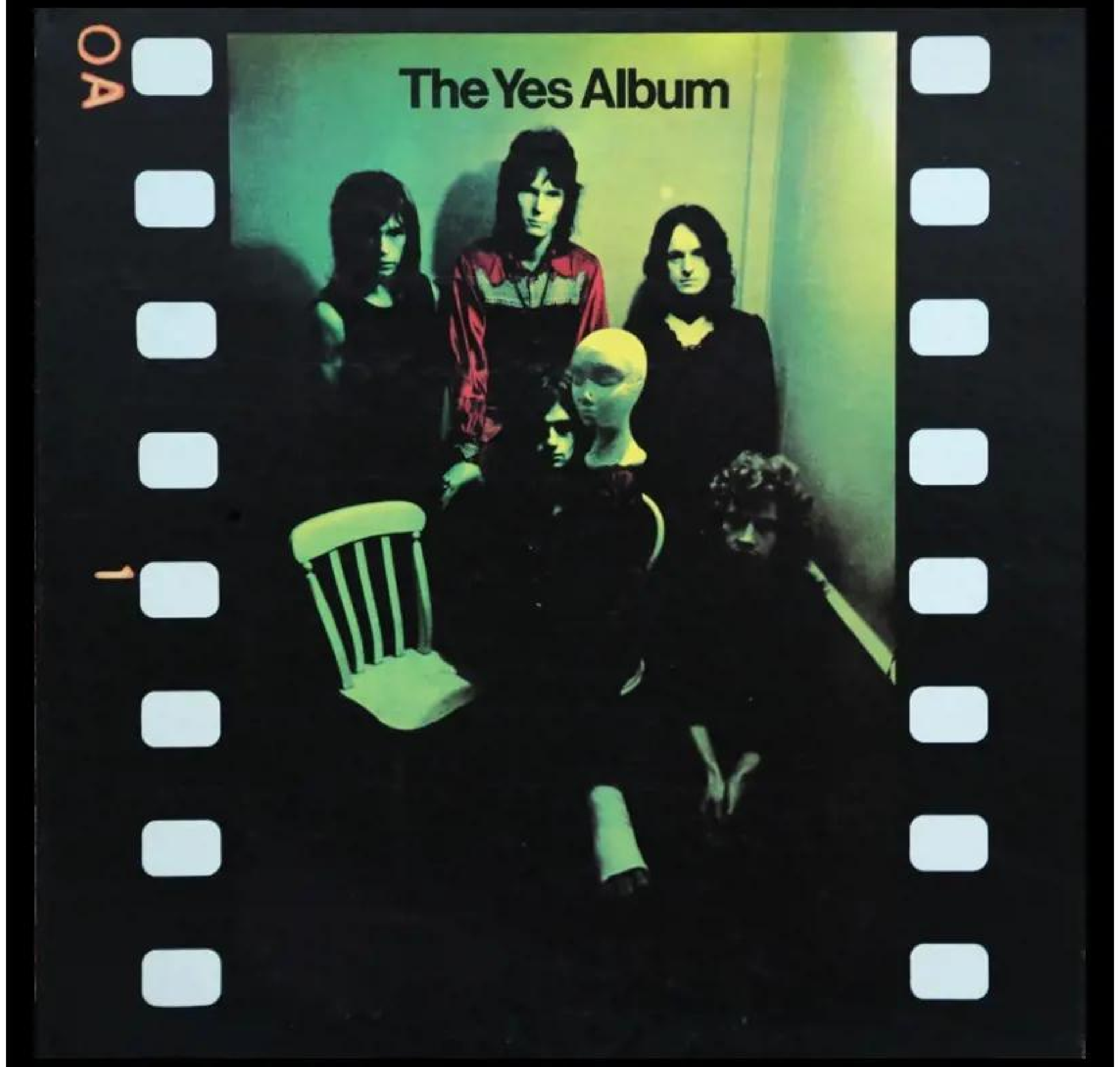
Having decamped to Devon, the band initially sequestered themselves in a cottage but that proved unworkable. They received complaints from the neighbours who, understandably, weren’t so keen on the sound of the group reinventing themselves after nightfall, and the guys subsequently found themselves at Langley Farm, near South Molton and splendidly isolated.

Despite manager Roy Flynn visiting in the writing process to tell them he could no longer afford to keep bankrolling the band, thus bringing their association to an end, Yes’ creativity increased. Howe is sure the very surroundings had a significant impact.“It was very much like The Band,” Howe says. “One of the good things about going to the country is, of course, there are no distractions [unlike] working for, like, three hours in Soho or something and going, ‘Oh my God, I gotta get outta here!’”

Tony Kaye also has fond memories of the period and recalls the late-night journeys through tiny country lanes. “Steve and I used to go out and I

COVER STORIES

Phil Franks discusses the making of *The Yes Album* cover.



PHIL FRANKS BY DAVID REDOM

“At the time I was working a lot on *Friends* Magazine with the late Jon Goodchild, who’d come over from the States from *Rolling Stone*. He was their art director at the time. Out of the blue, he asked me to do some stuff for this upcoming Yes album, which they were recording at the time.

“He, being a designer, had this idea of getting the band against a white backdrop. He’d got some Marshall stacks sent to him in this photographic studio and we had the band’s name stencilled on the back and the plan was that we’d stand the band around them and we’d start from there.

“We got set up and waited for ages. We checked our setup and checked it all again for something to do. Eventually, well past the agreed time, the band turned up with one of them [Tony Kaye] with his leg in plaster. They were on their way back from a gig the night before and they’d had a terrible car crash. They’d just come to the studio in Westbourne Grove straight from the hospital.

> **“I loved the music. Still do. *Starship Trooper* is my favourite but there’s a whole load of stuff on it I love.”**

“We got them arranged but the studio lights suddenly wouldn’t work! We checked the fuses, the power was okay, but we had no idea why they weren’t working. I hated working in studios anyway so I said, ‘Let’s get everybody to my flat on Portobello Road.’ The flat was a shithole and had once been used as a squat. As we got out of the cabs, I noticed that somebody had thrown a polystyrene head out on the street, probably from a hairdresser’s shop, so I grabbed it. I’ve no idea why. I never liked setting stuff up. Whenever I was sent to photograph people, I’d just sort of be there. I let them be themselves. I never told people to do this or do that.

“So, I put some tea on and told them to make themselves at home. I cleared the kitchen table out of the way and we tried some shots with this roll of infrared film and some filters I had. The polystyrene head we hung from the ceiling with some fishing wire and took a shot or two. I went to Advision Studios and spent pretty much a whole night there with them. It was fluorescent lighting so again it had a greenish hue. I also shot them at the Lyceum in a soundcheck rather than the actual concert.

“I have very fond memories of that cover. I was paid £140, which was a lot of money for me back then. I used it to go to San Francisco and ended up working for *Rolling Stone* and other things for several months. I loved the music. Still do. *Starship Trooper* is my favourite but there’s a whole load of stuff on it I love.” **SS**

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ALL PHOTOS: PHIL FRANKS

used to drive around Devon. Steve and his guitar [would] create a lot of what eventually turned up on *The Yes Album*. Steve and I were pretty close at that time and a lot of good collaboration came out of it down there."

Almost from the off the new incarnation of the group caused a stir. The vigour and exuberant confidence was palpable. One person who was impressed was the keyboard player from support act Strawbs. "It was a show in Hull and after we'd done our set I went into the audience and watched Yes. It was an eye-opener," Rick Wakeman recalls. "I'd never seen a drummer mic up all his drums before or tune them like Bill did. Most bass players used big Marshall stacks and played a Fender jazz bass. Chris came up with some amp that I'd never heard of and a Rickenbacker that was so out of fashion it was unbelievable. Then, there was Steve and when most guitarists were using Strats, Telecasters and big Marshall stacks, he had a couple of little Fender Twin amps and was playing a semi-acoustic Gibson. Most singers at that time were six-foot-three [with] long greasy hair and tenor voices, and on comes this diminutive little pixie, with an alto voice who looked tiny against Chris, Steve and Bill who were all six-footers. The only person that I suppose looked normal for a rock band was Tony Kaye, who had a Hammond organ. I was so knocked out with how they played, the arrangements, and their style. They bore no resemblance to anything else that was about at the time and I thought, 'Shit, this is going to be a great band.'"

It's sobering to think they nearly went from a great band to being a late band. Instead of a career spanning more than half a century, 1971 could have been marked by the posthumous release of their third and final album. Driving themselves to and from gigs, and falling asleep at the wheel on the return journey was almost an occupational hazard. Bill Bruford recalls he often sat in the front maintaining a constant barrage of questions in order to keep Jon Anderson or Chris Squire from dozing off. After a show in Plymouth, having got as far as the outskirts of Basingstoke, their luck ran out.

"It was tough driving in all kinds of conditions up and down the M1 and everywhere," Tony Kaye remembers. "We hit a truck head-on in the pouring rain. I was in the passenger seat, the rest of the band were in the back. It was a full-on impact and the engine of our vehicle was pushed back into the cabin and broke my foot. It was scary." The accident left Kaye's foot in plaster and the rest of the band treated for shock and minor injuries. The aftermath is captured on *The Yes Album*'s front cover, with the band having been released from the hospital that very morning.

"Everything was always just in the nick of time with Yes," reflects Bruford. "We only just got to the gig in the nick of time, only just got a new manager in the nick of time, you know? It was all but over. People have forgotten just how critical a time it was then. We weren't costing a lot – the rent of a house and a bit of food to keep body and soul together – but Roy Flynn had done that for a while, bless him, and we were in deep trouble."

Naturally, says Bruford, the band were concerned, but sometimes in the face of such a crisis you find the reserves of courage and self-belief to turn the situation around. "It was really Jon Anderson who drove it, though. It was Jon who was always on the phone, always hustling gigs, it was Jon who managed to find [film production and distribution company] Hemdale, who were then employing Brian Lane. Brian was like a branch of the social services," he says with a laugh. Lane's influx of financial support enabled the band to grab time at Advision Studios. Lane's background as a record plugger was also invaluable when it came to the release of the record.

"There's another thing I remember about the release of *The Yes Album*, which was an incredibly serendipitous series of events," he continues. "Between January and March 1971 there was a national postal strike, which meant that the *Melody Maker* chart had to be suspended because they

> "They argued fiercely, but what they came up with, the two of them playing together, I don't think I've ever worked with a drum bass combination, quite as incredible as Bill and Chris."
>
> **Rick Wakeman**

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Tony Kaye's last gig with Yes, at London's Crystal Palace Bowl on July 31, 1971.

FRAGILE Y

weren't getting the returns back from the shops to be able to compile a chart. Who should step into the breach but a young Richard Branson who had a chart and so the newspapers of the day started printing Richard Branson's Virgin chart. The guy who owns the charts puts in what he wants. Brian Lane said he'd get us in the charts. People talk, a couple of hundred quid changes hands and before you know it, you're in the charts. It's *that* that got Yes going."

Whatever dark deeds may have been indulged in, *The Yes Album* broke through at No.7. It was the first time a record by Yes had entered the UK Top 40 and it went on to reach No.4 in the Official UK Charts.

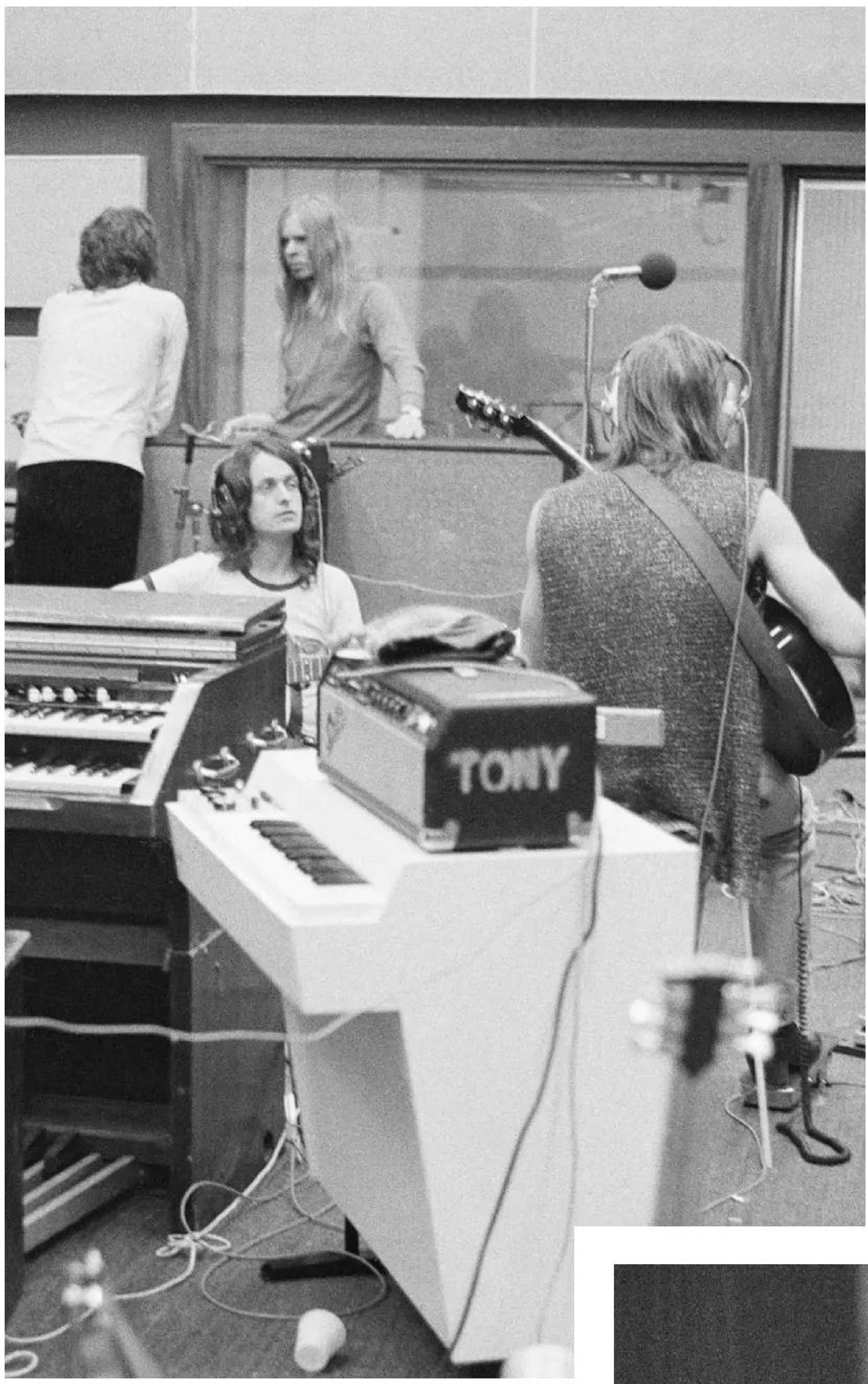
"Up until Yes, I'd known nothing but serious letdowns that I don't even care to talk about; being left flat here, being turned down there, being accused of this here, being fired there, you know, losing out," says Steve Howe from his home in Devon, in the very property where the band created *The Yes Album* just over 50 years ago. "So when I joined Yes it was all musically very exciting. Although I enjoyed cover versions, I couldn't see a career being built out of them."

Howe argued it was better to expend energy on original material rather than someone else's songs. If that was true for *The Yes Album* it would certainly be true for the songs that would become part of their next album.

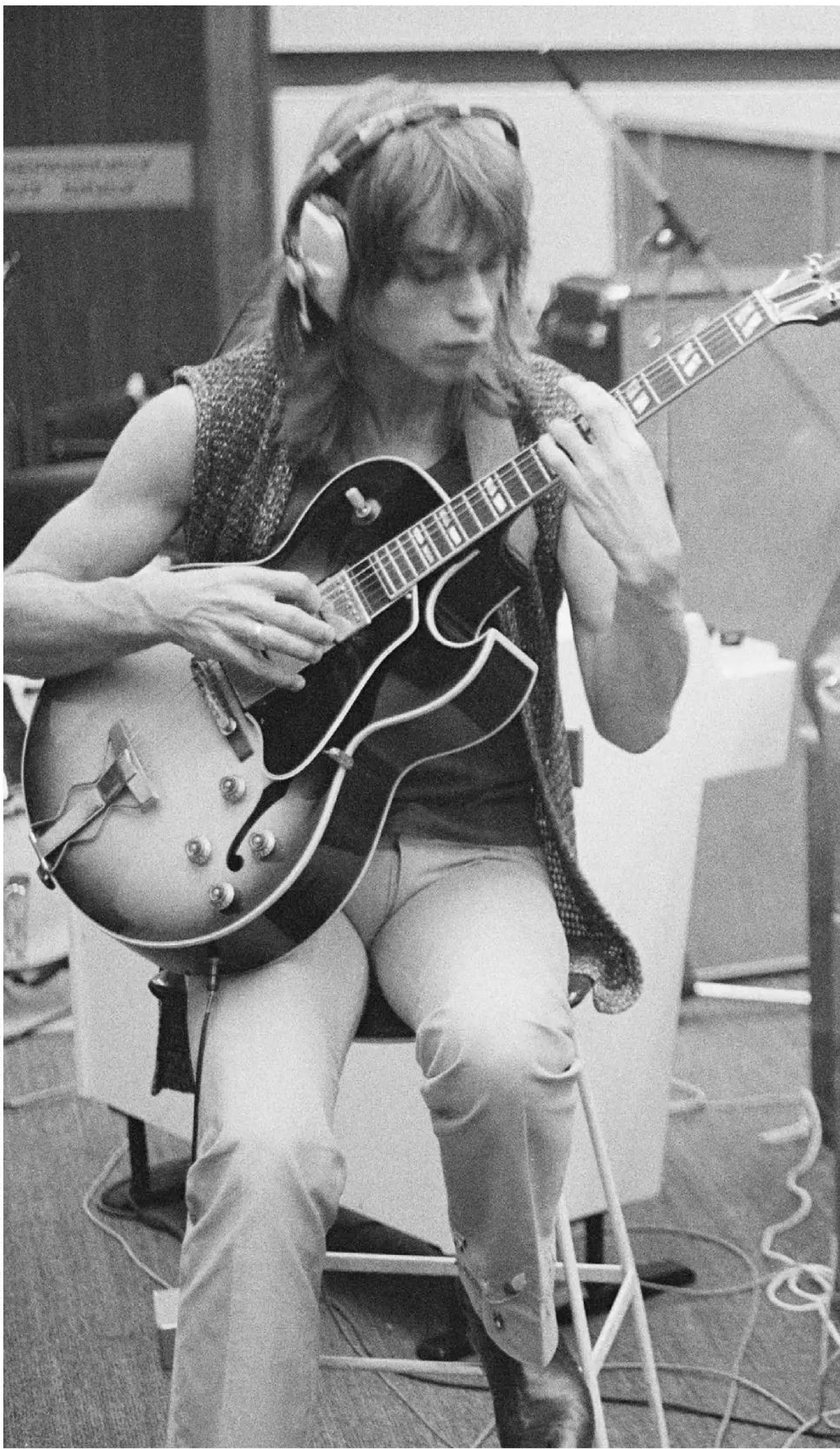
The success of their third album, released in February 1971, gave Yes the chance they were looking for. It was an opportunity they consolidated with live tours in Europe and, crucially, in June, their first North American tour supporting Jethro Tull. It was on that first date, in Edmonton in Canada, that Bruford recalls thinking, "At last, we're in the right place."

In those bracing times of survival and arrival that characterised 1971 for Yes, the continuing expectations surrounding musical growth and evolution meant there was no time to rest on their laurels. If anything, their first real taste of commercial success demanded that they press on, taking advantage of record company largesse to pursue their own artistic goals. Why do more of the same when you could do something you'd not previously tried? Tony Kaye, by his own admission, pushed back against Anderson's continuing demands for a grander, broader sound primarily being generated by the keyboards: "It's a fact that I love the Hammond and piano and I was a purist on that level. It's been said that I didn't want to use the Moog or Mellotron although, of course, I used both in Badger [Kaye's first post-Yes venture]. I was very concerned that keeping either of those two instruments in tune was a problem. The sound of the Mellotron trying to emulate orchestral strings was a little bit biting for me. The Moog was the beginning of a lot of things of course, and it wasn't that I was completely against using them, but it's true they were not my favourite instruments."

Steve Howe still admires Kaye's dedication: "Listen, I've got to say, Tony is such a great player. On the first



August 20, 1971: Yes recording *Fragile* at Advision Studios in London.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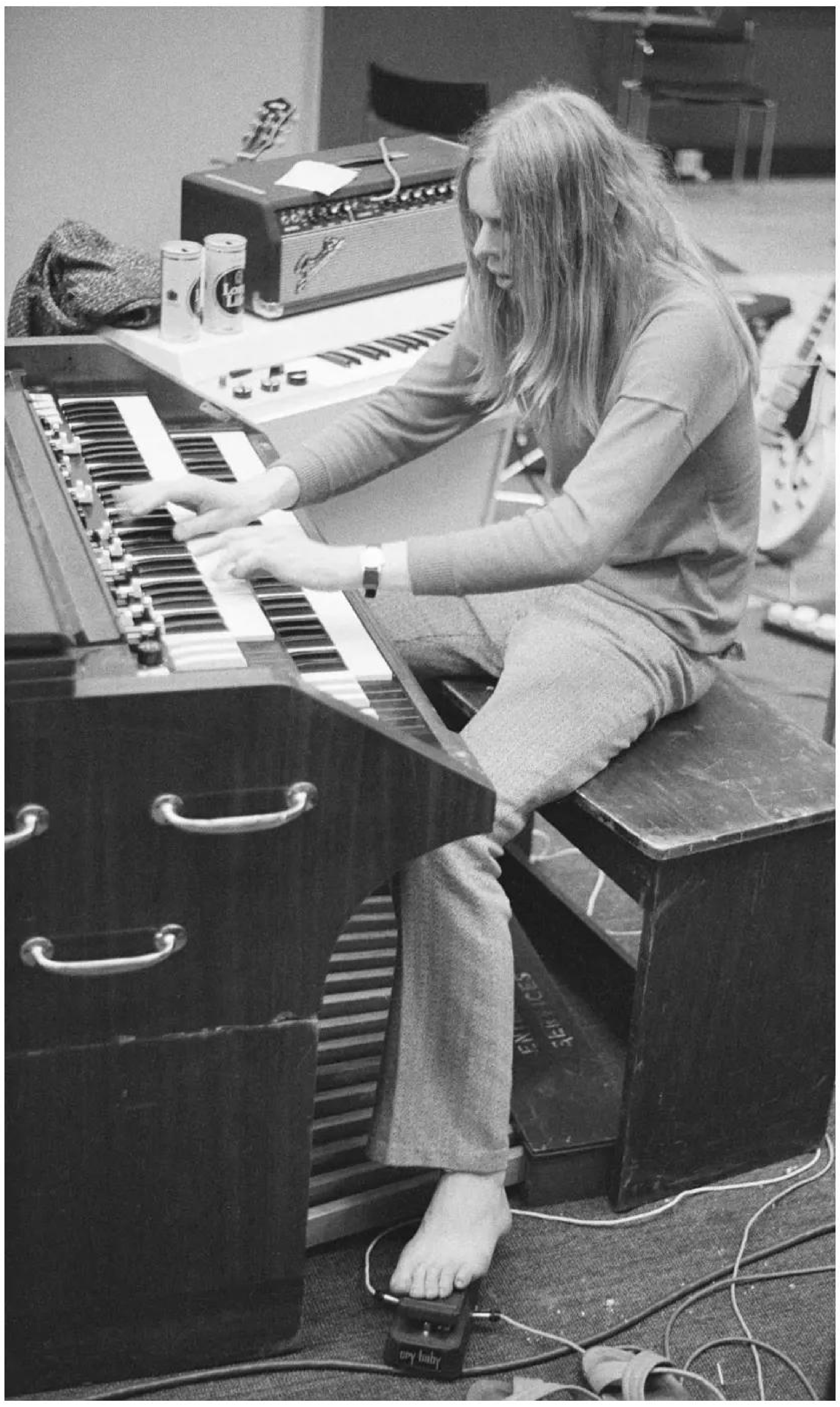
> "They were very special times because although we didn't know it at the time, it became harder and harder to create that kind of environment."
>
> **Steve Howe**



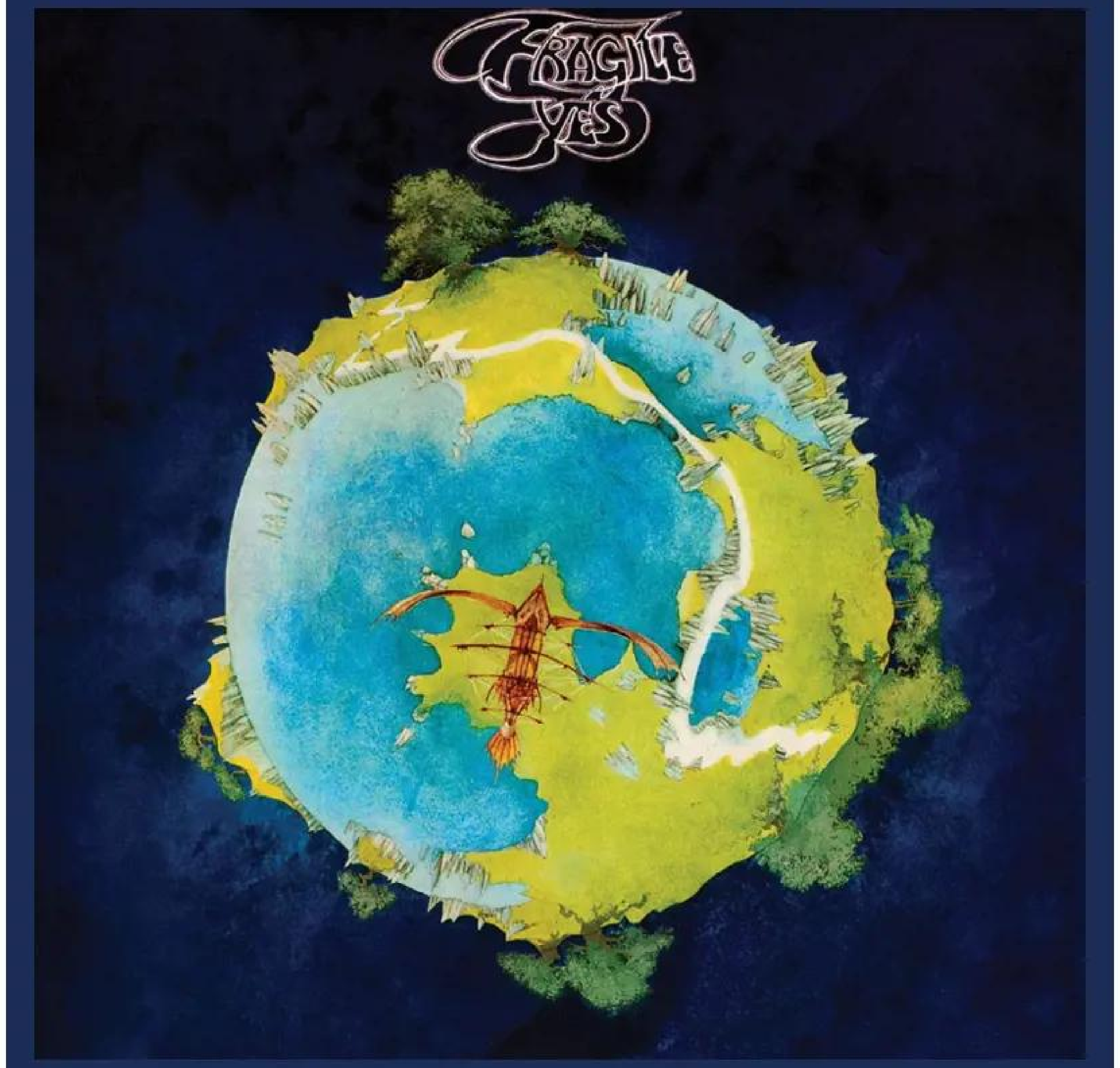
three albums, he's the only player who could have done that stuff. He plays some absolutely brilliant things but we were we already going to go hell for leather wanting to get all the textures and be this kind of orchestral sort of group. So when the idea came that there was someone more versatile and willing, that's where we went."

Kaye played his last gig with Yes on July 31, 1971 at the Crystal Palace Bowl. It was just over a year since Peter Banks' departure, although he'd return to the Yes family some 11 years later.

Yes knew exactly who to call in order to supply the kinds of textural sounds they were so keen for the newly emerging music to include. In an interview with journalist Penny Valentine in 1970, Wakeman had bemoaned the state of keyboards, particularly the use of piano and organ onstage, citing Keith Emerson and Tony Kaye as the only two in the field who were truly exploring the organ's possibilities. "I have always tried to play something nobody else can play, I think I've based all my organ work on that kind of attitude," he told the journalist. Some 50 years on he's sure that Yes had seen the interview and marked him out as a person of interest. When the call did eventually come from Chris Squire asking if he'd

COVER STORIES

How Roger Dean entered the world of Yes and changed it forever…



“Phil Carson, the then-boss of Atlantic Records in England, introduced me to the band at Advision Studios. I went there with my massively decorated copy of *Parsifal* illustrated by Willy Pogany. The illustrations, decorations and the text were very intense. I said to the band it would be fantastic to have this magical story in this sort of form. Of course, we couldn’t put out an album that was like an old book but there’s a little attempt at that in printing on the brown paper on the inside and having that booklet within it. So it was the faintest of faintest shadows of how it might have been.

“The gatefold cover I saw as a story, a fantasy. It wasn’t symbolic of anything. It was part of a story within a story, a creation myth. The idea of it being a glimpse of an epic narrative was there from the beginning. We see [that on] the covers of *Close To The Edge* and the paintings on *Yessongs*, and others that revisit that world.

“I hadn’t heard any of the music on *Fragile* before starting on it because I usually finish the cover long before the music is done. That’s the way the logistics of print works. I had to finish before the band, so I never got to listen to the album they were making. But they’d already just done *The Yes Album* and I was completely blown away with *Würm* from *Starship Trooper* which is amazing.

“They’d already just done *The Yes Album* and I was completely blown away with *Würm* from *Starship Trooper* which is amazing.”

“Rick Wakeman and I started working with Yes at about the same time. He knew when they’d be recording or on tour because he was with the band. But I wasn’t. There’d be a period of perhaps six or nine months between delivering *Fragile* and talking to them about *Close To The Edge*. In that time I was doing other things but hoping I’d work with them again because the music was fantastic.

“I designed a Yes logo after I’d finished *Fragile*. Nobody asked me to do it. No one had logos in those days but I did it because I thought I could. But I had no idea, no realistic expectation, that they would ask me to do another sleeve. It wasn’t a given that I would. So the logo was kind of done in midair as it were, with the hope that they would ask me. And they did.

“I saw Bill Bruford, bless him, in a BBC interview years later talking about the cover to *Fragile*, saying that I’d misunderstood the brief because they’d had this idea of having the cover look like a flight case with the ‘Fragile’ stickers all over it. I never misunderstood – I just thought we could do better. [Laughs.]” **SS**

See www.rogerdean.com for more information.

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like to come along to a rehearsal, it was at 2am, and an exhausted Wakeman, who’d just rolled into bed after a long recording session, firmly and unambiguously said, “No!”

Having already decided to leave Strawbs and go back to session work he wasn’t interested in joining another band. But having seen Yes previously and liked their material, he decided to go along to a rehearsal and see what they were up to. Where’s the harm, he thought… it might even be fun. It was interesting, he says, because he’d never worked on a song the way Yes did. In Strawbs, Dave Cousins would usually supply a song more or less complete, with only the arrangement to be worked on by the band. With Yes, things were very different, he says.

“I can remember, for example, Chris coming in and he’d been listening to King Crimson’s *21st Century Schizoid Man* in his car on the way up. He said, ‘You know, I’ve been working on an idea for a bassline’, and he played the line that opens *Heart Of The Sunrise* but that was it. I thought, ‘What’s that all about?’ Then Steve said, ‘Does it work coming down the other way?’ Which he did. Then Chris said, ‘Well, what about if we go up another octave?’ So, I said, ‘Well, what if I come down while you lot are going up?’

“And so we spent about an hour working on all the different ways that we could do this run, which was really interesting and with different sounds and Bill working on different patterns that he could do with it. I thought it was fascinating. We spent two or three hours doing that, and then after we’d done it loads and loads and loads of times, I think Jon said, ‘Well, what do we do? What’s next then?’ Steve had that line, so we put that together and shoved that on the end the whole thing started building around that. I came up with the weird chords that sort of come up underneath it, which became the chords for the song. By the end of the day, we’d put 60 per cent of *Heart Of The Sunrise* together. I thought this was absolutely fantastic!”

“I remember the first time I heard *The Yes Album* on a test pressing, I thought we sounded weird, even to me. But when *Roundabout* got going when we first heard it, I was like, ‘Oh my God, this is tight!’”

Steve Howe

At the end of an enjoyable day Wakeman still hadn’t intended to join the group but after giving Howe a lift home, without thinking, Howe asked if Rick could pick him up at 10 the next morning. “So I picked him up at 10 the next morning and we just carried on like that. *Roundabout* appeared in the same way. All the things for *Fragile* were done that way. It was quite an eye-opener and very exciting.”

Without intending to, Rick Wakeman had apparently joined another group and he went on to play a key role on Yes’ fourth album, *Fragile*.

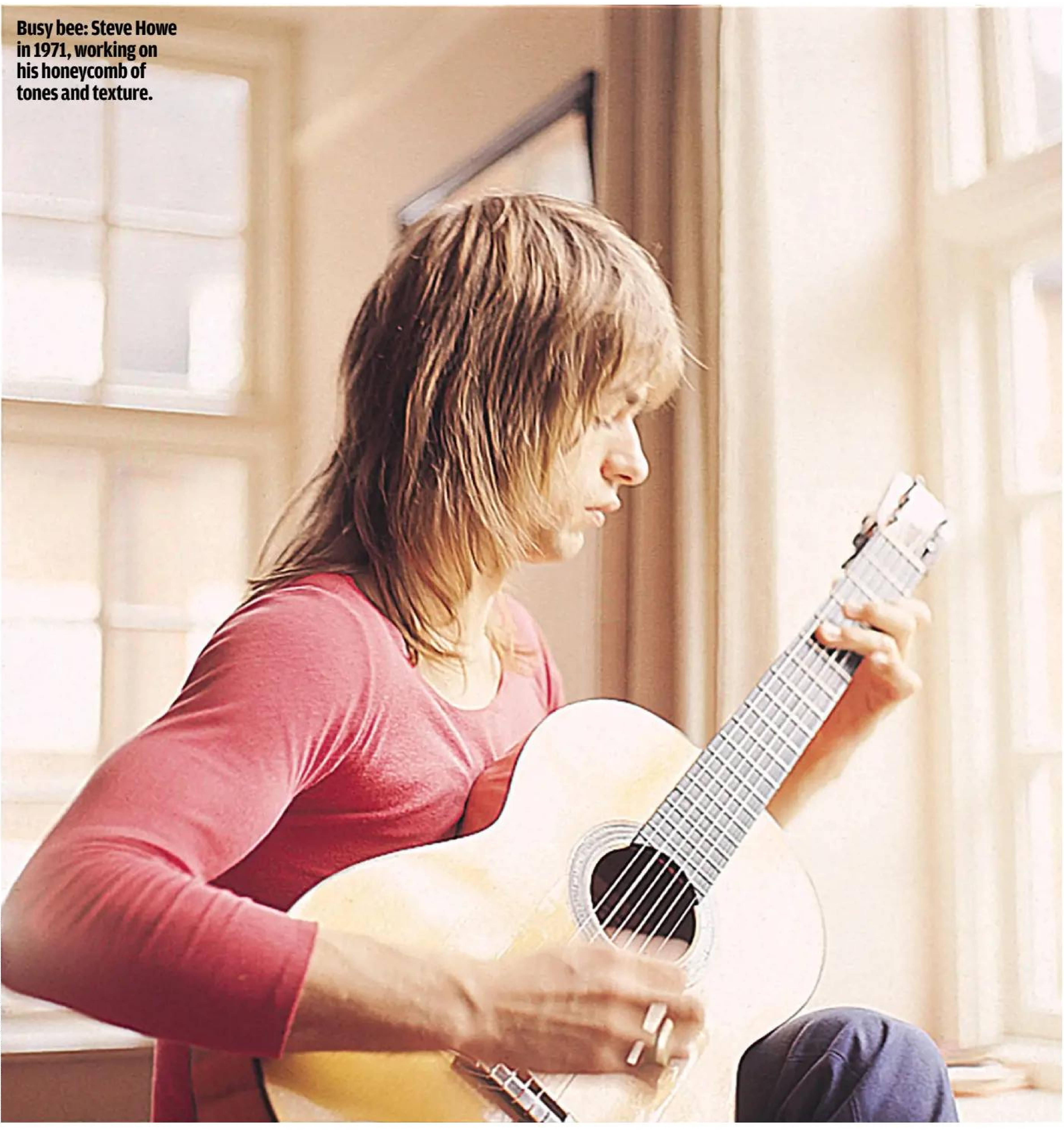
When Steve Howe closes his eyes today, he can still see small cameos from all the years he spent in Advision Studios, especially in relation to the making of *Fragile*. Some of those mental snapshots he carries from a lifetime spent within such cloistered spaces include: the control room, with the ever-present engineer, Eddie Offord at the controls; being sat in a broad semicircle in the large studio where they spent so much time, often from the middle of the afternoon and on into the early hours. He also recalls looking through the window of the separation booth as Jon Anderson sang, choosing which guitar to add to a track, and Bill Bruford attempting to conduct the band.

Bruford’s suggestion for the album was that each individual member of the band would take responsibility for the musical direction of a particular track, in effect becoming the ‘conductor’ of an ‘orchestra’ comprising the other members of the group. You can hear elements of it on Bruford’s *Five Per Cent For Nothing* and to a lesser extent, Chris Squire’s solo in *The Fish (Schindleria Praematurus)*, but Howe, Anderson, and Wakeman took the chance to make their own distinctive solo statements.

“I saw my natural step as doing *Mood For A Day*,” explains Howe. “Rick and Jon also kind of did their own thing. That’s what makes *Five Per Cent For Nothing* so perfect because that was really where Bill was heading. Things like my solo and Rick’s solo, in a way, make *Fragile* about those steep, steep contrasts.”

Mired in a tangle of contractual

Taking five:
Chris Squire in 1971.



Busy bee: Steve Howe in 1971, working on his honeycomb of tones and texture.

ALL PHOTOS: ©ROGER DEAN 1971/2021

problems, Wakeman was prevented from adding his own composition. Instead, he opted for a copyright-free arrangement of the third movement of Brahms' *Fourth Symphony*. Having only monophonic synthesisers, he spent hours painstakingly building up the electronic textures and layering within the piece, not unlike Wendy Carlos' *Switched-On Bach* pieces. "So of course you had your headphones on listening to the track while you put the next bit on it. It took ages on the days in the studio when I was doing it. It was probably it was Bill who would say 'Oh, I think Rick's doing cans and Brahms.'"

Despite being a full member at the time, Wakeman received no writing credits for contributions such as the extended piano suite that makes *South Side Of The Sky* so effective in its use of space and dynamic colour because of those publishing wrangles. "You didn't stop to fight about it with management because that would have held things up, and you were so keen just being there. They said it would all get sorted out and I'd get my writing credits but I never did," he laughs ruefully.

As the 'new boy' of the band Wakeman observed the interactions and roles within the group and their outcomes within the emergent music. "Bill was fantastic and worked so closely with Chris Squire. They argued fiercely, but what they came up with, the two of them playing together… I don't think I've ever worked with a drum/bass combination quite as incredible as Bill and Chris. The outcome was just always sensational. Steve played guitar like nobody else I'd ever known. He just had a completely different sound to everybody I'd ever played with. He played in a different way and it was quite incredible and inspiring because it left a lot of gaps for me to put things in and do things, which was fantastic."

Bill Bruford once observed that one of the best musicians he'd worked with was Jon Anderson, despite the fact the singer had little in the way of instrumental technique. Wakeman agrees with his judgement: "Jon was a musician in his head and that's something quite unique. He could hear things but he needed a band to get them across. It worked really well if you had the right line-up to do it. It was like, I suppose, five architects in the same room trying to build one amazing building."

Assiduously crafting songs from a disparate collection of runs, riffs, fragments, rhythmic patterns and other musical bricolage isn't easy or quick, yet the sessions for *Fragile* were incredibly productive. Sometimes emerging themes received attention but never quite landed.

Above left: Rick Wakeman with a four-legged friend.

Above: The reel thing – Jon Anderson.

> "You could laze by the pool on the top of the Sheraton Manhattan and hear *Roundabout* on WNEW-FM every 45 minutes. My world was all 'heavy rotation' and Billboard placings interlaced with enormous salads and suntans. Much more of that and I would have turned into a rock star."
>
> **Bill Bruford**

Some of the ideas created during *Fragile* would later be recycled as *Siberian Khatru* and *The Revealing Science Of God*. The ones that did make it to the final album stand as classics in the Yes catalogue, with *Roundabout* and *Heart Of The Sunrise*, being particularly outstanding. Listening to them is akin to witnessing an intricate mechanism, each cog and wheel interlocking to propel the various movements and sections. Bruford's sturdy yet always elegant drumming; Chris Squire's brightly lit, rasping bass; Wakeman's dramatic keyboards; Howe's intricate honeycomb of tones and texture; and Anderson's soaring vocals all added up to something that was substantial, authoritative and original.

In the beginning, Yes had sounded like one of many bands out in the field. But just nine months after the release of *The Yes Album*, and with *Fragile* now under their belt, it was clear that nobody else sounded like Yes.

Howe recalls the buzz of excitement on the first playback of a freshly minted test pressing of *Fragile* in the studios. "Somebody brought a sound system down from upstairs. I remember the first time I heard *The Yes Album* on a test pressing there, I thought we sounded weird, even to me. But when *Roundabout* got going when we first heard [*Fragile*], I was like, 'Oh my God, this is tight!' I could hear the harmonics and the vocal harmonies and I thought, 'Jesus Christ this sounds really good!' I could revel in it for a second and say this is *really* good."

Wakeman believes that *Fragile* worked so well because of the commitment each of them had to each other playing at a level they'd not previously achieved. Nevertheless, the degree of success initially took them all by surprise.

"I remember being in [the US] before it came out in England and we started getting messages that it was selling incredibly well. We went, 'Oh, really?' and we sort of came home to find we'd got a hit album."

Howe says they were acutely aware that this was their moment. "The second time we went back with *Fragile* we told Atlantic to really get behind it while we were out on tour. We had that self-belief and confidence because music will give you that. We really liked it, really believed in it. I mean, we liked *The Yes Album* quite a bit as well, but at that time *Fragile* took things to another level."

Bill Bruford recalls being taken aback by the way *Roundabout* suddenly became *the* track that every DJ wanted to play when he returned to the States, and by association, just how successful the band was. "You could laze by the pool on the top of the Sheraton Manhattan and hear it on WNEW-FM every 45 minutes. My world was all 'heavy rotation' and Billboard placings interlaced with enormous salads and suntans. Much more of that and I would have turned into a rock star."

Fragile was the first album by Yes to go in the US chart at No.4, eventually going Platinum in the UK and double-Platinum in the US. It's remarkable just how commercially successful Yes' 1971 albums were. Their songs were mostly complex and their lyrics anything but straightforward – even the man responsible for writing them admits they defy any definitive interpretation. In fact, when Jon Anderson sang, *'You'll see perpetual change'* it was a manifesto for the new Yes and a state of revolution that began with *The Yes Album* and continued through a run of releases that constantly upped the band's game and sometimes even tested fans' patience to the limit.

The Yes Album and *Fragile* completely transformed the fortunes of the group but in an alternative universe, had *The Yes Album* failed to sell Yes would have been dropped. What would have happened then? Would another label have taken up their cause? Perhaps they would have broken up and gone their separate ways? Maybe even the passing of a few decades would have burnished their three albums with a cultish gleam as they became the stuff of collectors' dreams, mint copies going for more cash than the band ever earned for doing a gig?

Back in the real world, things got increasingly surreal. Bruford, Howe and Wakeman all agree that the band's artwork was a key part of the change in how Yes were perceived. If the mysterious, urban confinement of *The Yes Album*'s cover belied the pastoral surroundings of its creation, *Fragile* took them to a very different space; albeit one that was remarkably in simpatico with its contents. Roger Dean's artwork might have been seen gracing the covers of other artists of the day – namely Osibisa – but the deeper symbiosis between the worlds he was creating on canvas was most securely rooted in Yes' albums.

"Roger's work for the band was amazing," says Wakeman. "We felt it reflected the music. You look at it and say, 'That's Yes!' When we first saw the cover to *Fragile* we all went, 'That's it!' Roger was the artistic sixth member of the band in the same way that George Martin was the fifth Beatle."

Howe emphatically agrees: "*Fragile* set such a high standard. Bang! There it was. It felt like it was ours as much as Roger's. I mean, we didn't design it but we kind of adapted Roger's works into our music. It's amazing how tight the two entities are."

Beat boy: Bill Bruford in 1971.

ALL PHOTOS: ©ROGER DEAN 1971/2021

Whether you've rolled a joint on it or not, gazing at the mysterious world of Roger Dean's art is illuminating. In those sparsely populated and gravity defying worlds, mountains really did come out of the sky and stand there. If the cover was a multicoloured fantasy then the music had a cinematic echo in its pristine, beautifully crafted sonic clarity. Suddenly Yes albums didn't only look great, they sounded great too.

As the band's momentum increased and the conceptual ideas got bigger, their albums took on lives of their own, becoming voracious monsters greedily living almost exclusively on precious metals of silver, gold and platinum. Concert halls grew in tandem, eventually only arenas would do. And when those weren't big enough, stadiums were added in order to accommodate the hordes after a hot ticket. The unstoppable gush of income gave their accountants three-day migraines as they tried to tot it all up. Band management and record label executives became minor potentates. Even once-broke ex-managers got to dine on the royalty overrides and other contractual crumbs that fell from the groaning table. And the members of the band? Success of this magnitude ripples like an unseen gravity field affecting those under its influence in profound, unpredictable ways. They had the freedom to do whatever they wanted and they did it. But where once individuals worked closely, over time, in these strange and rarified times they grow apart. Closeness replaced by distance. And sometimes, a sharp distance at that.

Howe reminisces over the first rehearsals as the band made *Fragile*. "They were very special times because, although we didn't know it, it became harder and harder to create that kind of environment. In other words, the rehearsals that were inspiring were the ones where we were all in the right frame of mind, where somebody has an idea and we didn't chuck it out because we didn't like it. We said, 'Well, there's something in there, what's going on? Show us it.' They'd show you the tune and you'd work things in around it."

Working with goodwill and able to compromise, and see a piece possibly go off in a direction they hadn't anticipated can be incredibly creative but it takes time, he says.

"All the difficulties you might encounter along the way in that process are essential to the outcome of there being an album. If you're going to accept a wishy-washy outcome then you can just float along with it but being in a band is about ideas… It can be tough. It's about making decisions when it comes down to it."

Big Generator

From LSD 'death' to CEO of a 30-million-selling band, **Chris Squire** was the rock on which Yes were built. In 2014, we joined him to look back over his wondrous journey.

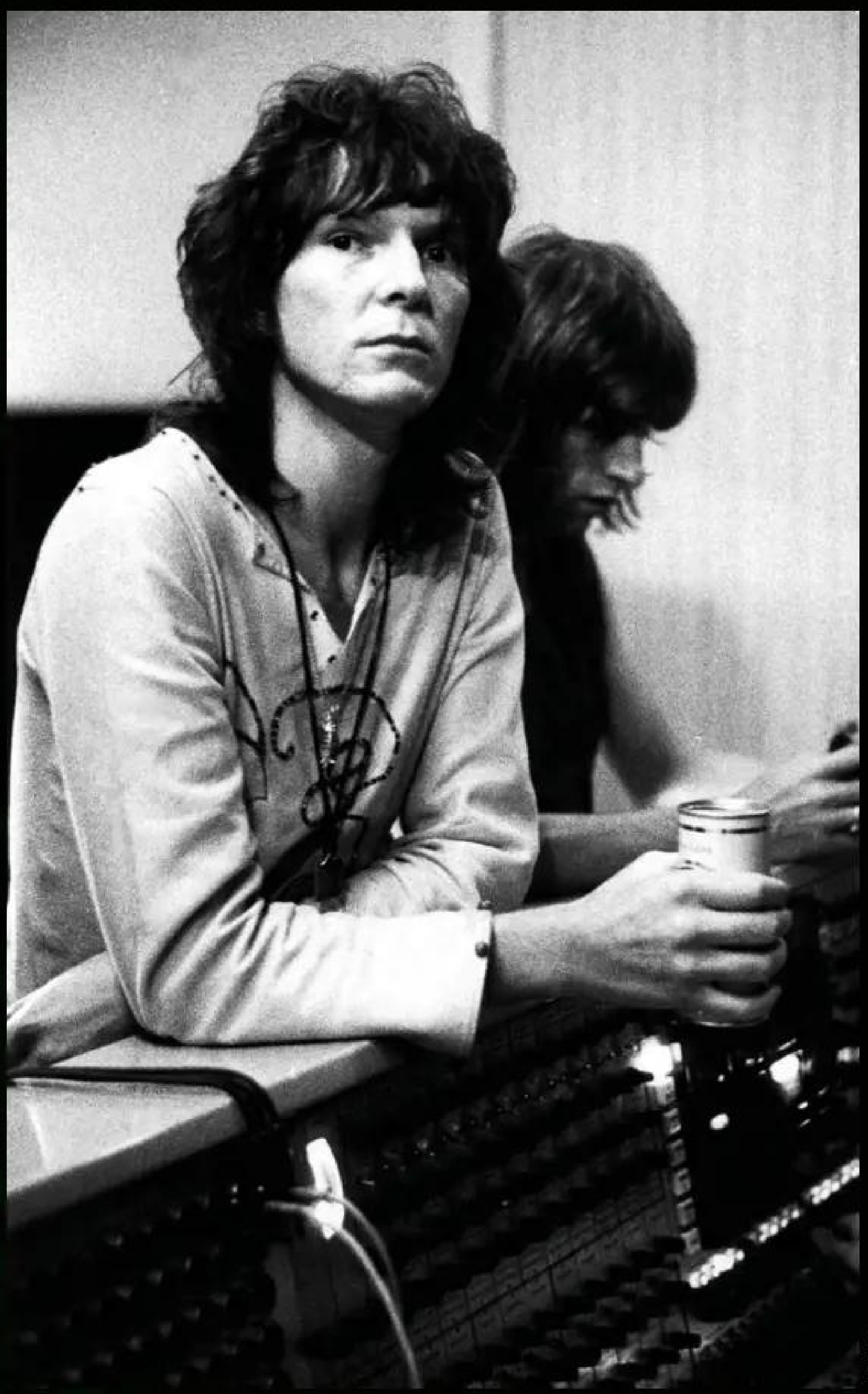
WORDS
Mark Blake
PORTRAITS
John McMurtrie

In 1968, 19-year-old Chris Squire came round in the geriatric ward of the Chelsea And Westminster Hospital, convinced he was dead. He'd ended up there after taking homemade LSD, and being found, crazed and gibbering, by his girlfriend at the flat they shared in nearby Kensington. "It was like being in God's waiting room," Squire recalls now. "For a while I really didn't know if I was still alive."

When he realised he wasn't dead, Squire returned to the flat – and stayed there for months. "This girl looked after me," he sighs. "She worked all day and I stayed in all day. The most I could manage was a trip to the shops at the end of the road." There was, he insists, one good outcome to all this. "Day after day, I just practised and practised playing the bass."

Squire's drug misadventure was arguably the jumping-off point for a career with Yes that has lasted five decades and amassed around 30 million album sales. Despite those figures, the resolutely unsexy 'prog rock' tag means Yes never attracted the critical acclaim enjoyed by some of their contemporaries. Nor did they split up for any length of time and wait for their stock to rise. Instead, Yes just kept going, with Chris Squire permanently behind the wheel, and sometimes driving without due care and attention.

Yes's line-up has changed with comical frequency, but Squire remains the one constant. His thunderous, acrobatic bass lines and harmony vocals have fired up every Yes album from their 1969 debut to this summer's *Heaven & Earth*. But he remains an enigma: a multi-million-selling rock star who can still go about his business without being accosted for an autograph or selfie every five minutes.



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Today there's more of Chris Squire than there once was. But, at well over six feet tall, he carries it well. Dressed from platinum-blond head to toe in black, the 66-year-old moves through the 15th-floor bar of London's Langham Hotel with the unhurried, regal gait of a Tudor king, albeit one with an Alexander McQueen skull-print scarf draped around his neck.

His opening gambit – "Shall we get a glass of wine?" – is quickly followed by "How about a bottle?" And so, as World Cup pundits discuss Germany's chances against France on a nearby plasma screen, Squire settles down with a glass of chilled Chablis.

"My first job was not far from here," he says, casting an eye out of the window. "It was at Boosey And Hawkes, the music publishers. I'd been kicked out of school, and my mum took me to a recruitment agency and said: 'My son likes music. Have you got anything for him?'"

Squire's whole music career seems to have been marked by a series of happy accidents. Raised in the north London suburb of Kingsbury, he was a choirboy at his local church when he joined his first group. The church's choirmaster, Barry Rose, who would go on to conduct St Paul's Cathedral Choir, inspired Squire and friends to form their own choral group. "Barry turned us into the best choir in England," he says. "When King's College or St Paul's went on holiday, we were *the* go-to choir."

All was going swimmingly until 1963 when Squire heard The Beatles. "And I thought, fuck that, I want to be in a group that don't use music stands." Soon, one of his schoolfriends had pointed out "my big hands" and suggested they'd be good for playing the bass. ➜

Tea for five: Squire (front) with the original Yes line-up.

Squire started playing youth clubs in a group called The Selfs and growing his hair. Before long the headmaster of his upmarket private school had given Squire and his schoolfriend two-and-sixpence to get their hair cut. "It was the last day of term and we wanted to keep our long hair for the summer holidays, so we took his money and walked out."

The job at Boosey & Hawkes was only ever a means to an end. Soon The Selfs merged with The Syn, and the band started playing regular gigs at the Marquee. The Syn followed the musical arc of many mid-60s groups. "Like The Who, we started off playing Tamla Motown covers," Squire explains. "But then psychedelia came along and we went a bit silly."

Part of going "a bit silly" involved a weekly pilgrimage to UFO, a club in London's Tottenham Court Road, where the budding Pink Floyd played. "It became a regular weekend thing," Squire says. "Drop acid and go to UFO on Fridays, then the trip carried on through Saturday, and on Sunday you recovered." Which is how Squire ended up sampling a friend's home-made LSD. "I think I had a touch of flu before I took it, so it probably wasn't a good idea…" Squire freaked out in the middle of the night and ended up in hospital. Despite thinking he was near death, he was soon well enough to talk to the police, who wanted to know where he'd acquired the drugs.

"Phil Lynott said: 'Do you want a line of coke?' And there was smack in it."

Pretending he was still disorientated, Squire gave them a cock-and-bull story about being approached by an Australian he'd never met before in the Earls Court Wimpy bar. And they believed him. In fact, you get the impression Squire has floated through life off the back of a side order of charm, cunning and good fortune, as well as his musical talent. Despite frying his brain cells with DIY hallucinogenics, Squire practised the bass day in, day out, convinced he'd found his vocation. "The Syn had opened for Jimi Hendrix," he says. "So I saw what was possible, and I just had this innate faith that I was going to make it."

The Syn didn't make it, but by summer 1968, Squire had formed Yes with The Syn's ex-guitarist Peter Banks and Lancastrian milkman-turned-lead singer Jon Anderson. Progressive rock fans usually work themselves into a lather about such albums as Yes's *Close To The Edge* ('72), and not without good reason. But Yes had been breaking new ground ever since the jazzy rearrangements of Byrds and Beatles songs on their eponymous first album. "Emotionally intense and imaginatively conceived," was music journalist and future pasta sauce maker Loyd Grossman's assessment of Yes's debut in rock magazine *Fusion*.

There are 13 ex-members of Yes to date, if anyone's still

Wedding bells ring for Squire and first wife Nikki in 1972.

Squire, Yes's only constant member, in the mid-80s.

Fish out of water: Squire in his element onstage in 1978.

GETTY XS

counting. Squire isn't, but agrees to offer a potted profile of some of them whenever their names come up. Gifted guitarist Peter Banks (who died last year) was the first to go, replaced by Steve Howe in time for 1970's breakthrough *The Yes Album*. "Pete was always a grey, sad person," Squire says. "And he really didn't like the orchestra on [second album] *Time And A Word*."

With Howe in the band, so began Yes's imperial 70s reign. With it came a public persona: arty, virtuoso, terribly serious…. *Close To The Edge* was inspired by German philosopher Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*, *Tales From Topographic Oceans* by a Hindu scripture. On stage – and determined not to be upstaged by glittery cape-wearing keyboard ace Rick Wakeman – Squire sported a billowy blouson decorated with butterfly motifs, and played an extended solo titled *A Bass Odyssey*.

Unlike their more hedonistic contemporaries Led Zeppelin or The Who, Yes were relatively clean living – at least to start with. "We were strictly a pot and hash band at the beginning," says Squire, who's sworn off LSD after his hospitalisation.

On one occasion, he and Steve Howe found themselves in a pub with *Melody Maker* writer Chris Welch and had no idea what to order: "We barely drank, so I think we asked for two Camparis."

All of the band, barring Wakeman, were also vegetarian for a time. Squire lasted five years. "And then I went back to fish," he says. "And then it wasn't long before someone said: 'Hey, there's this really good steak restaurant I know…'" Only Howe still swears off meat. "Which is why Steve still looks like a fucking stick insect."

In the meantime, Squire had been introduced to a new, less organic perk of life in a touring rock band. On Yes's 1973 US tour, a member of their unknown support act, the Eagles, took him aside and, like the fictitious Australian in the Earls Court Wimpy bar, said, "Try this." Squire dipped into the bag of white powder. "Cocaine," he says, smiling.

At some point Squire also started drinking more than the occasional Campari. "I became very, very involved in wine," he murmurs, peering into his Chablis like a fortune-teller pondering a crystal ball. Squire would go on to install a well-stocked wine and port cellar in the mock-Tudor mansion he shared with first wife Nikki and their three daughters in the rock stars' enclave of Virginia Water, Surrey.

Then again, Squire could afford it. By the end of the 1970s Yes had scored eight consecutive UK and US Top 10 albums, and their bass player had made a solo album, 1975's *Fish Out Of Water*, which featured his old choirmaster Barry Rose on pipe organ. Anyone needing a reminder should seek out a clip from a 1975 edition of *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, where Squire performs his pomp-rock single *Hold Out Your Hand*, backed by a string section and wearing what appears to be a cross between a kimono and a set of Laura Ashley curtains.

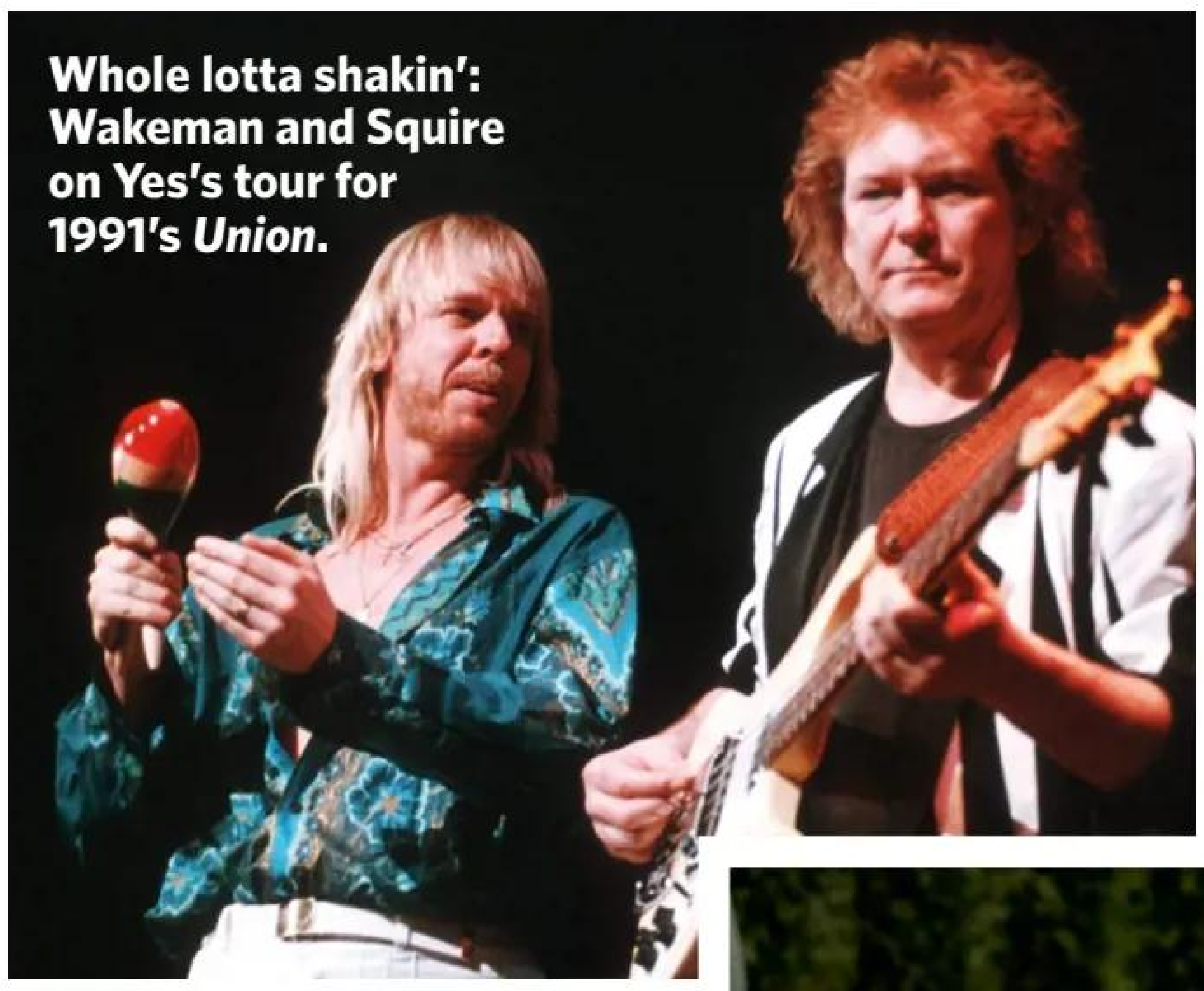
It was all getting "a bit silly" again. Yes's 1974 album *Relayer* included a jazz-prog-fusion workout titled *The Gates Of Delirium*, featuring Wakeman's replacement, Swiss keyboard maestro Patrick Moraz ("The best Hammond player I ever worked with," offers Squire. "But Steve and him didn't have a bond"). Unsurprisingly, *NME* denounced Yes as the "ultimate in Pomposity Rock", and were soon championing the Sex Pistols and The Clash instead.

Not that Yes cared. "Did we notice punk rock? Not at all," insists Squire, who claims that the closest he came to liking punk was when his 12-year-old daughter Carmen got him into The Police's *Outlandos d'Amour* debut album. "We were getting the music papers sent to us in America, and we'd see we were being branded as dinosaurs by these new bands, and we'd think, 'Oo are you?' – and then walk out and play to 120,000 people."

Off tour, and back in Virginia Water, though, Squire barely had time to draw breath. There was always another album to write, another tour to plan, another vineyard to investigate… But he now had something to help keep him going.

"I got involved in cocaine," he admits. "Blame the Eagles. But that was it. As far as I know, no one in Yes ever did heroin." Apart from the time he and Nikki were at a party being thrown by Thin Lizzy's Phil Lynott. "Phil was a naughty boy. He said: 'Do you want a line of coke?' And there was smack in it."

Squire drove home from the party – "one did in those days" – in a euphoric haze: "We came to these traffic lights and I just stayed there. After a while Nikki said: 'You do realise the lights have changed from red to green four times since we've been sitting here?' I was just sat behind the wheel going: 'Hmmm, this is good.'"


Whole lotta shakin': Wakeman and Squire on Yes's tour for 1991's *Union*.

Yes had weathered punk, but the wheels were now coming off the band from within. The spiritually minded Jon Anderson would later grumble about how certain band members' drug habits were putting his chakras out of balance. But Squire insists that drugs weren't the problem, and that by 1978's *Tormato* album, "We were all sick of each other and needed a break."

Anderson and Wakeman walked out after aborted sessions with Queen producer Roy Thomas Baker. Another band might have thrown in the towel. Once again, though, Squire's innate faith in what he was doing carried him through. Anderson and Wakeman were quickly replaced by vocalist Trevor Horn and keyboard player Geoff Downes, aka The Buggles, whose *Video Killed The Radio Star* had just been a huge hit.

"They were huge Yes fans," says Squire. Another happy accident, then.

Downes, who is back in the current line-up, described what it was like joining Yes in 1979: "They all had their own limos, and were buried in that 'rock star with a big house' image."

The next Yes album seems to have been recorded to a backdrop of screeching Rolls-Royce tyres and urgent phone calls to managers, wives and drug dealers. It had the appropriate title *Drama*. "We'd sold out four Madison Square Garden shows in advance," recalls Squire, "so we had five weeks in which to get the album done before then. That's where the cocaine was useful. Because it was night after night of sixteen-hour sessions."

Released in 1980, *Drama* fizzled with Class A's, but its urgency and energy were preferable to the over-ripe *Tormato*.

Yet the line-up didn't last, and Squire soon found himself at a Christmas party swapping numbers with Jimmy Page. "John Bonham had died, and Jimmy wanted to start playing again." Squire roped in Yes drummer Alan White and the three met up at a studio in Maidenhead. Page was on a health kick. "Jimmy was really behaving himself," says Squire now. "Only smoking cigarettes through a holder."

The trio demo'd four instrumental tracks, and Squire's dad suggested a name for the blossoming supergroup: XYZ. According to Chris, though, Zeppelin's over-protective manager, Peter Grant, objected to the Y for Yes coming before the Z for Zeppelin. It was the first big problem. The second was that they didn't have a singer, and despite Page's promises, Robert Plant never showed up. "For that reason it just fizzled out," he says.

In the meantime, Steve Howe and Geoff Downes went on to enjoy a US No.1 album in 1982 with their new group, Asia. Squire must have ➜

Chris Squire, London, July 2014.

WWI

Yes 2014: (l-r) Chris Squire, Alan White, Steve Howe, Jon Davison, Geoff Downes.

KEVIN NIXON/FUTURE

> *"We'd be branded as dinosaurs by these new bands, and then walk out and play to 120,000 people."*

been just a bit jealous and hungry for revenge?

"No, not *jealous*," he insists, as I refill his glass. "I did think, though, that Asia was a bit corporate American rock and sounded as if it had been assembled by radio programmers."

A year later, Jon Anderson had rejoined Yes, and Trevor Horn was ensconced as producer. Yes emerged, as if from cryogenic storage, with a hotshot young guitarist, Trevor Rabin, and a state-of-the-art Fairlight sampling synthesiser. The subsequent album, 1983's *90125*, become Yes's biggest-seller ever, and delivered a UK and US hit with *Owner Of A Lonely Heart*. A harsher critic might call that album corporate American rock. But what saved *90125* was that Yes again broke new ground by using sampled sounds left over from Horn's last production gig, punk svengali Malcolm McLaren's *Duck Rock* album. "Nobody had heard those sounds before," says Squire, proudly. "It was all very new."

By now, though, Squire's marriage had broken up and he'd moved to Los Angeles where he began his blurry Hollywood phase: "There was a party every night." Meanwhile, the redux Yes could be seen performing on MTV and disguising their forty-something wrinkles behind *Dynasty*-style hairdos. It couldn't last. And it didn't. Anderson walked out after 1987's *Big Generator*.

"I never wanted to call that version of the band Yes," Squire insists. "But it was [Atlantic Records executive] Phil Carson who said: 'Why try a new brand when the old one has been so successful?'"

You suspect that Squire has been adhering to that maxim ever since.

"I know I'm the only member of Yes to have been in the band the whole time, but it's not by design but by default," he insists. "I've always been the one left holding the baby, and what happens is new people come along to help me hold it."

Current members Steve Howe and Geoff Downes have been in and out more than once. Jon Anderson is currently out, due to ill health, and their new album *Heaven & Earth* has American vocalist Jon Davison helping to hold the baby – and sounding remarkably like Anderson.

"I spoke to Jon Anderson not long ago," reveals Squire, who gives the impression that some ex-Yes members are sitting on a substitutes' bench just waiting for the nod. "We had a nice chat. I think we will do something together again – it's just that he may not be up for full-scale touring."

As for Rick Wakeman – a fully paid-up member of the 'No Jon Anderson, No Yes' club, and King Rat of the showbiz charity organisation The Grand Order Of Water Rats – Squire's not so sure. "I don't think Rick's interested," he sniffs. "He's in his own world, working his way towards his knighthood."

Life for Chris Squire seems more sedate now. These days he lives in Phoenix, Arizona with third wife Scotland and their five-year-old daughter Xilan. "It's been good for me to have a young kid again," says this father-of-five, "especially one that's had an iPad since she was two."

For Yes, the days of limousines, mock-Tudor mansions, 120,000-seaters and the Eagles' marching powder are a distant memory. So too, though, are the brave new sounds that typified the likes of *Drama* and *90125* in the 80s. Yes albums nowadays sound like old Yes albums but without what Loyd Grossman might call the "emotional intensity". When Squire spends five minutes dissecting the shortcomings of Yes's current label, Frontier Records, there's a sense that he misses those good old bad old days.

Nevertheless, Yes are still in demand. By the time you read this they'll be deep into a US tour. Just don't expect to hear much from *Heaven & Earth*. "The tour had been sold as 'Yes does *Close To The Edge* and [their 1971 album] *Fragile*,'" admits Squire.

Which is fine, except *Fragile* contains solo compositions by three ex-band members, some of which could be described as 'challenging'. Right now drummer Alan White is tackling his predecessor Bill Bruford's atonal solo workout *Five Per Cent For Nothing*. "It's some sort of exercise in drum logistics," Squire laughs. "We've rehearsed and rehearsed it."

However, as Squire drains the last of his Chablis and prepares to toddle off, you know he'll weather this storm like he has every other storm in the band's history. "I still enjoy it," he says. "It's part of me. It's what I do." From lapsed choirboy and would-be acid casualty to CEO of Brand Yes, it's not been a bad life for Chris Squire. ●

"…is a marriage multiplied by five"

Producer Roy Thomas Baker on working with prog's most dysfunctional band.

Yes's 21st album, *Heaven & Earth*, was produced by Roy Thomas Baker, whose past console credits include Queen, Journey, The Cars and very nearly Yes in 1979. Baker had been booked to oversee the follow-up to 1978's *Tormato*. Unfortunately, by the time he'd arrived in Paris, where the band had started recording, the group had almost broken up.

Squire recalls that Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman had been writing songs together, and that he and the rest of the group [Alan White and Steve Howe] weren't overly impressed with the results: "We got as far as four backing tracks." Then disaster struck when White went to a roller-disco and broke his ankle. "Without a drummer we couldn't do any more, so we shelved it."

"And I buggered off back to the States," adds Baker (below, third right).

So it was a pleasant surprise when Baker took a call from the band in 2013 "suggesting that we try again. I'd been a Yes fan since the *Roundabout* days," says the producer. "And I'm pleased to say that their standards are still as high."

Baker has always been known for expressing strong opinions in the studio.

"Yes took my criticism and suggestions well," he insists, "as long as they didn't completely alter the framework or the direction of the song. But it's like a marriage – there are always arguments. But with Yes it's a marriage multiplied by five."

The album bears Baker's production hallmark, but he wasn't responsible for the final mix. "We had problems with certain studios, nothing was getting done and we'd already missed our deadline," explains Squire. "It wasn't Roy's fault." In the end, Squire called on engineer, producer, multi-instrumentalist and ex-member of Yes Billy Sherwood to oversee the mix.

Baker, meanwhile, remains effusive in his praise for Yes and the album, especially after his first collaboration went so wrong.

"I remember meetings with [Yes manager] Brian Lane and [Atlantic Records head] Ahmet Ertegun in 1979, and they were trying to do everything they could to keep Yes together. But it didn't work. It was nice to get the chance to make it work this time."

PRESS

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CLOSE TO THE EDGE: The Making Of A Masterpiece

It's considered to be the pivotal **Yes** album, the one that flung the band to new artistic and commercial heights. But how did Yes reach this zenith – and where did this complex creativity leave them personally?

Words: Sid Smith

"Never mind 40 years ago. In 40 years' time, people will pick out *Close To The Edge* and say, 'That's what progressive rock was all about.'"

Bill Bruford

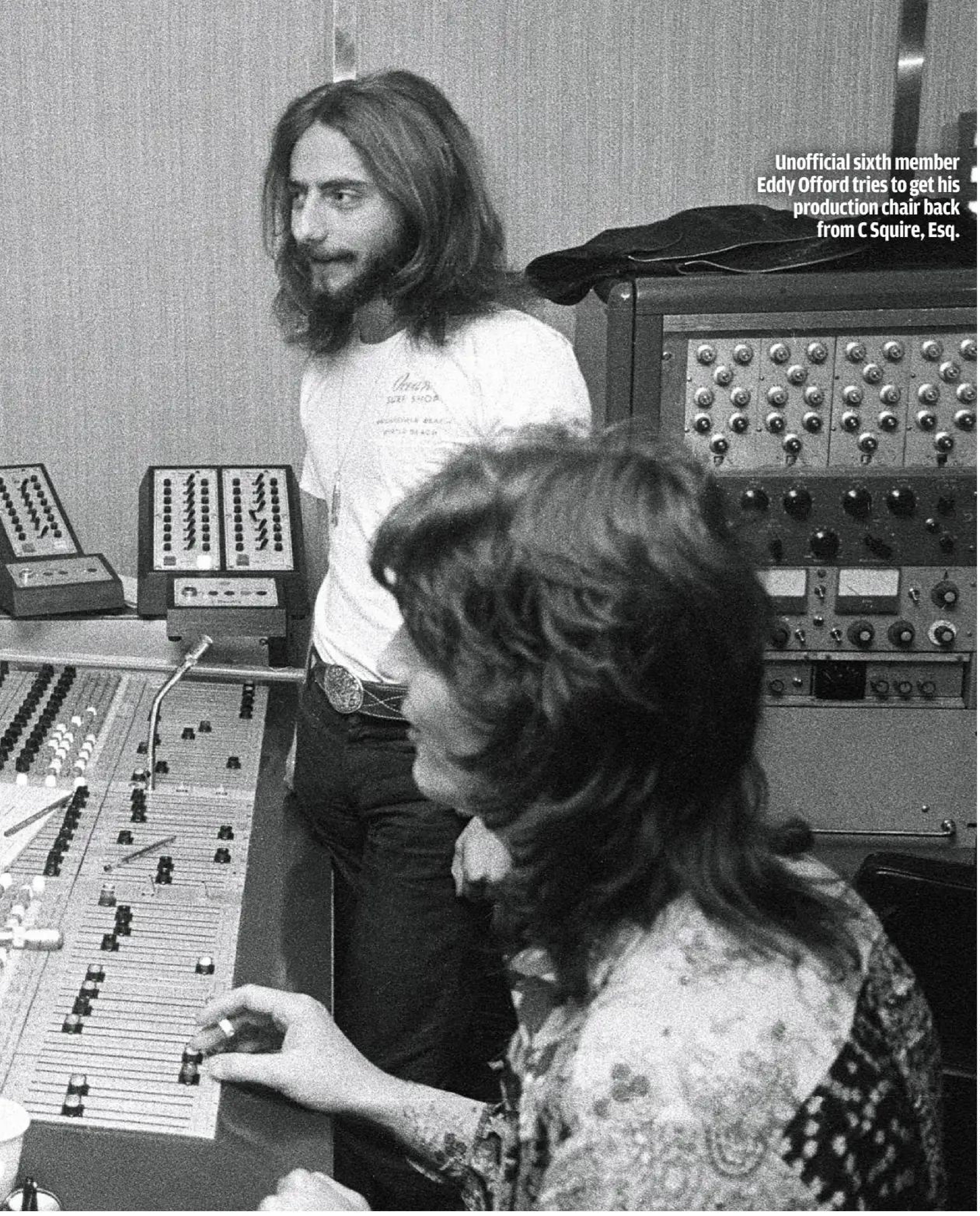
BARRIE WENTZELL PHOTOGRAPHY

Some albums feel as though they've been around forever. So familiar are we with their chords, rhythms, melodies and spaces, they seem completely integrated into our daily lives over many years, having seeming arrived fully formed and somehow immutable. It's difficult to imagine them as having existed in anything other than their final state.

Yet often what appears solid and immovable is borne from any number of fleeting encounters: words from a book; a shuddering sense of clarity; the dawn breeze caressing the skin; a distant laugh; a certain look found in the eyes of a stranger; the grasp of a child; the exultation upon hearing a single note in a symphony; a flavour or scent of something ineffable and intuitive.

Such things in isolation appear fragmented, transitory and dislocated – an apparently random stream of information. Yet it's the business of the artist to be able to distinguish patterns and correspondences, to perceive connections,

Chris, Jon and Steve swap ideas at Advision Studios, London, that fateful July 1972.



Unofficial sixth member Eddy Offord tries to get his production chair back from C Squire, Esq.

BARRIE WENTZELL PHOTOGRAPHY

> "So the idea was that as human beings we are close to the edge – the edge of realisation, whatever anybody else might want to think."
>
> **Jon Anderson**

to be able to collect and collate such ephemera, transforming it into something coherent, lucid and lasting.

Such a process definitely applies to Yes's fifth album, *Close To The Edge*, a triumphant product of five musicians who knew, as the title implies, they were on cusp of life-changing events.

"We changed the rules with that album," says Steve Howe, intensely proud of what they achieved. "We were thinking on another level. Sometimes it's not until the album has finished that it dawns on people the journey they've been taken on."

Since its release 41 years ago, *CTTE* has been one of the key touchstones in the progressive rock canon. The influence of this album and the classic Yes sound might be said to have touched bands as diverse as Änglagård, Mars Volta, Wobbler, Lifesigns, Spock's Beard and countless others. Even those bands notionally outside the prog rock camp such as Everything Everything appear to have assimilated Yes' way of densely layering their material.

No pint, Tweet, Facebook status or forum quip between progheads would be complete without a joust about its merits. To its detractors, the three tracks that make up the record stand jointly accused of contributing to the kinds of excesses that gave progressive rock a bad name. The music was wilfully esoteric, and who the hell knew what a Khatru was, Siberian or otherwise? Not even the band seemed to know the answer to that one!

To its fans, however, the album is nothing less than the brightest and best example of one of the most creative periods in rock history, an aspirational beacon that many would point to and follow. Looking at the resurgence of the progressive rock scene of the early 21st century, it would be hard to find a band that was not in some way touched or influenced by the 37 minutes and 51 seconds laid down in the gloomy recesses of Advision Studios in the summer of 1972. That kind of impact was something Yes themselves experienced at the time. When you speak to the individuals who combined to realise all the ideas that made the album, one thing is clear: this album was *the* turning point in their professional lives.

The success of *Fragile* gave Yes the freedom to push boundaries like never before.

ROGER DEAN

The legendary fantasy artist on creating *CTTE*'s sleeve.

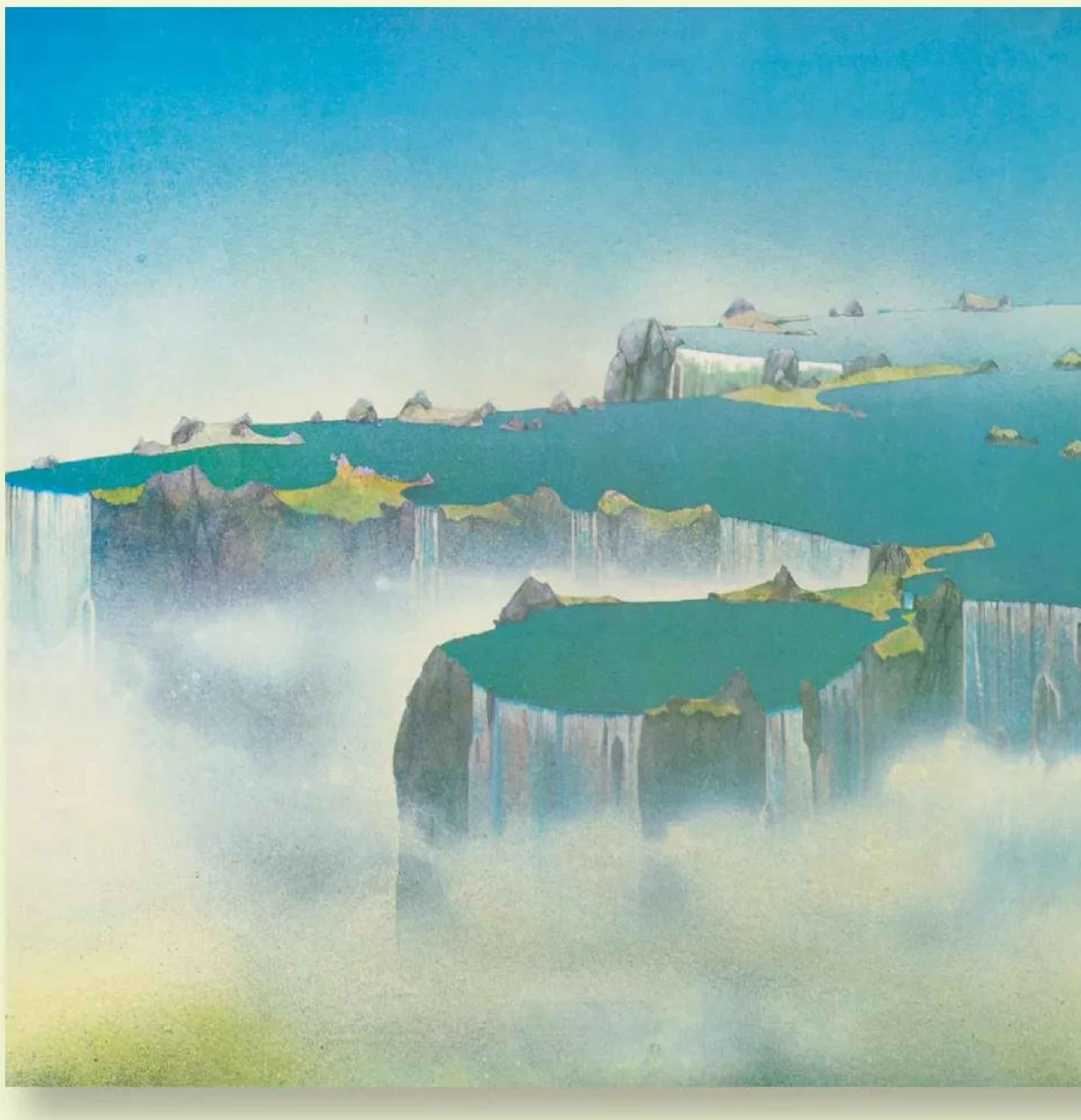
For an artist whose name is readily associated with all kinds of fantastical vistas and otherworldly imagery, it's rather ironic that Roger Dean's cover to *Close To The Edge* is a masterclass in understatement.

"The texture on it was meant to feel like a leather book cover. I've got hundreds of dark green leather-bound sketch books, and I quite liked that look and feel," Dean tells *Prog*. "I also wanted it to have some memory of that idea of creating a book that we did with *Fragile*. The common wisdom among advertising and art directors is that green won't sell, but I thought it might!

"After *Fragile*, I felt Yes needed a logo and designed it without talking to them," he continues. "For all I knew they weren't even going to come to me for the next album, but I still designed this logo. I did it over the course of a train journey to Brighton. I started with a notion that you can put these three letters together in an interesting way and by the time I got to Brighton, I'd pretty much done it. I wanted to show it off, and so the idea of putting it on the cover was good. Everyone liked it. I talked to Atlantic to have the letter silver-blocked like you would do on a traditional book, but that never happened."

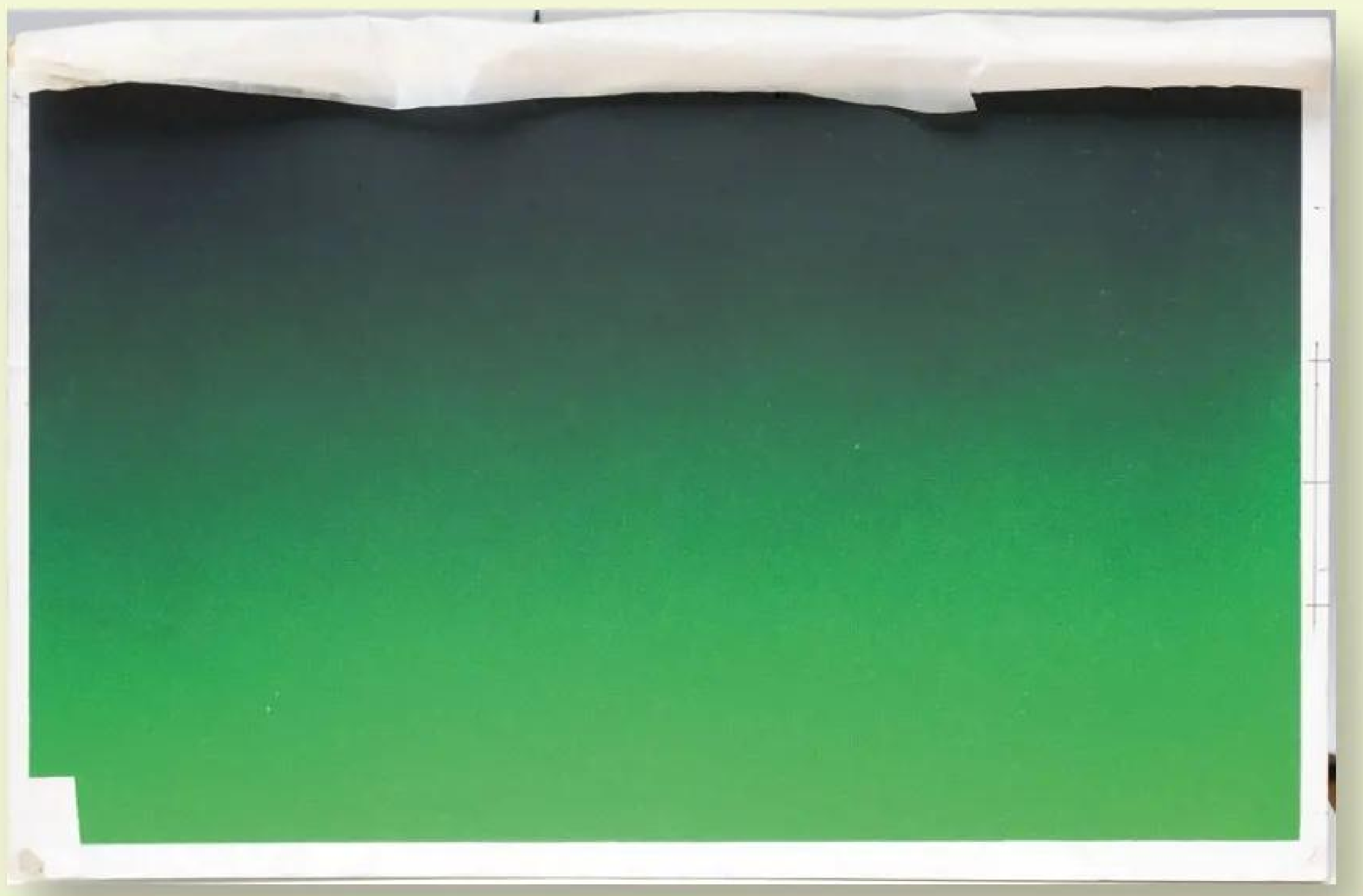
If *Close To The Edge* was the soundtrack, opening the gatefold album sleeve on Dean's spectacular landscape provided the cinematic experience to go with it. "It came with wanting to paint a world that was magical and miniature and impossible but totally credible.

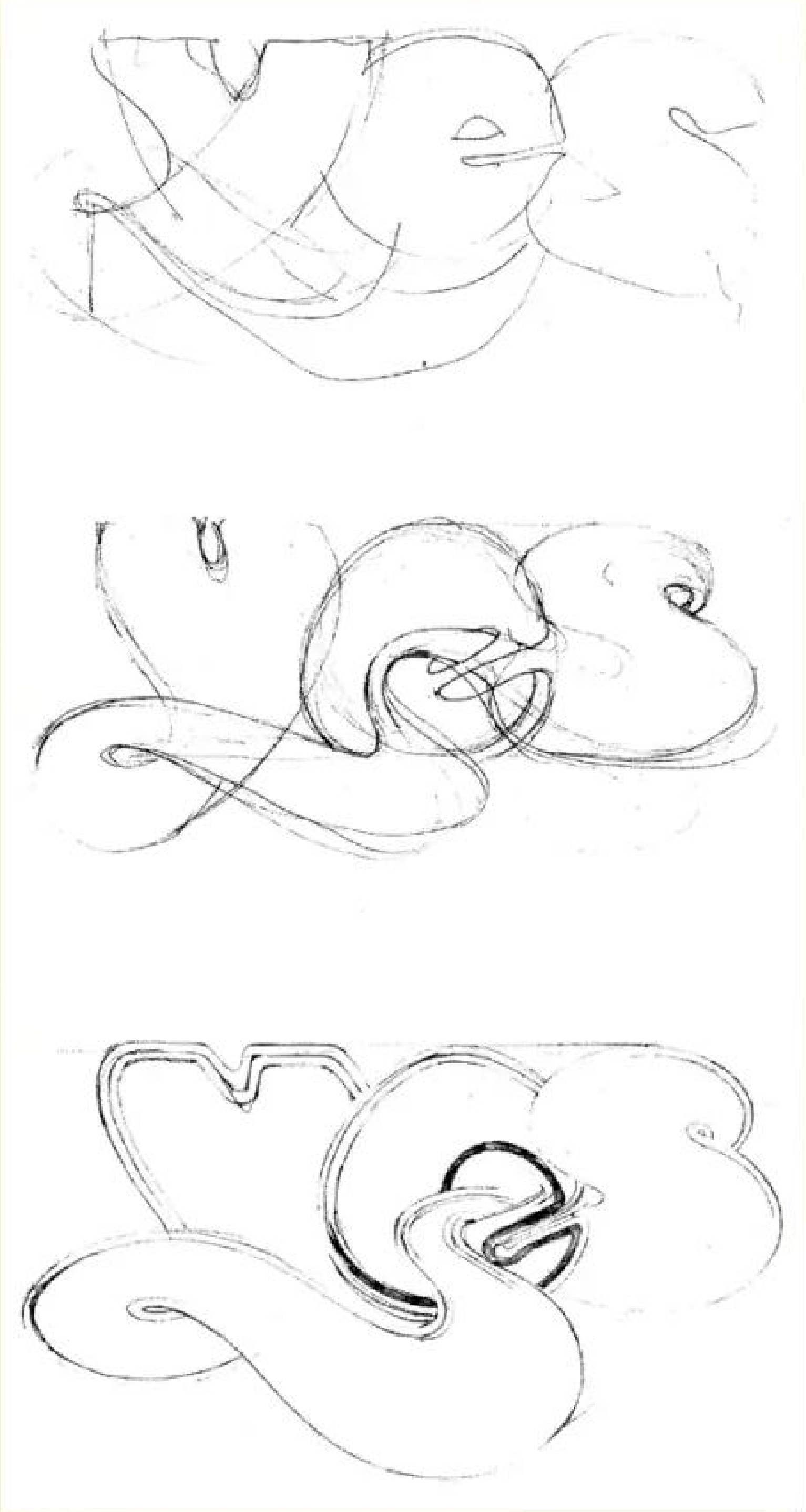
"I was painting landscapes to look real and, in the most literal sense of the word, enticing. I wanted them to pull you in and make people want to imagine what it would be like getting

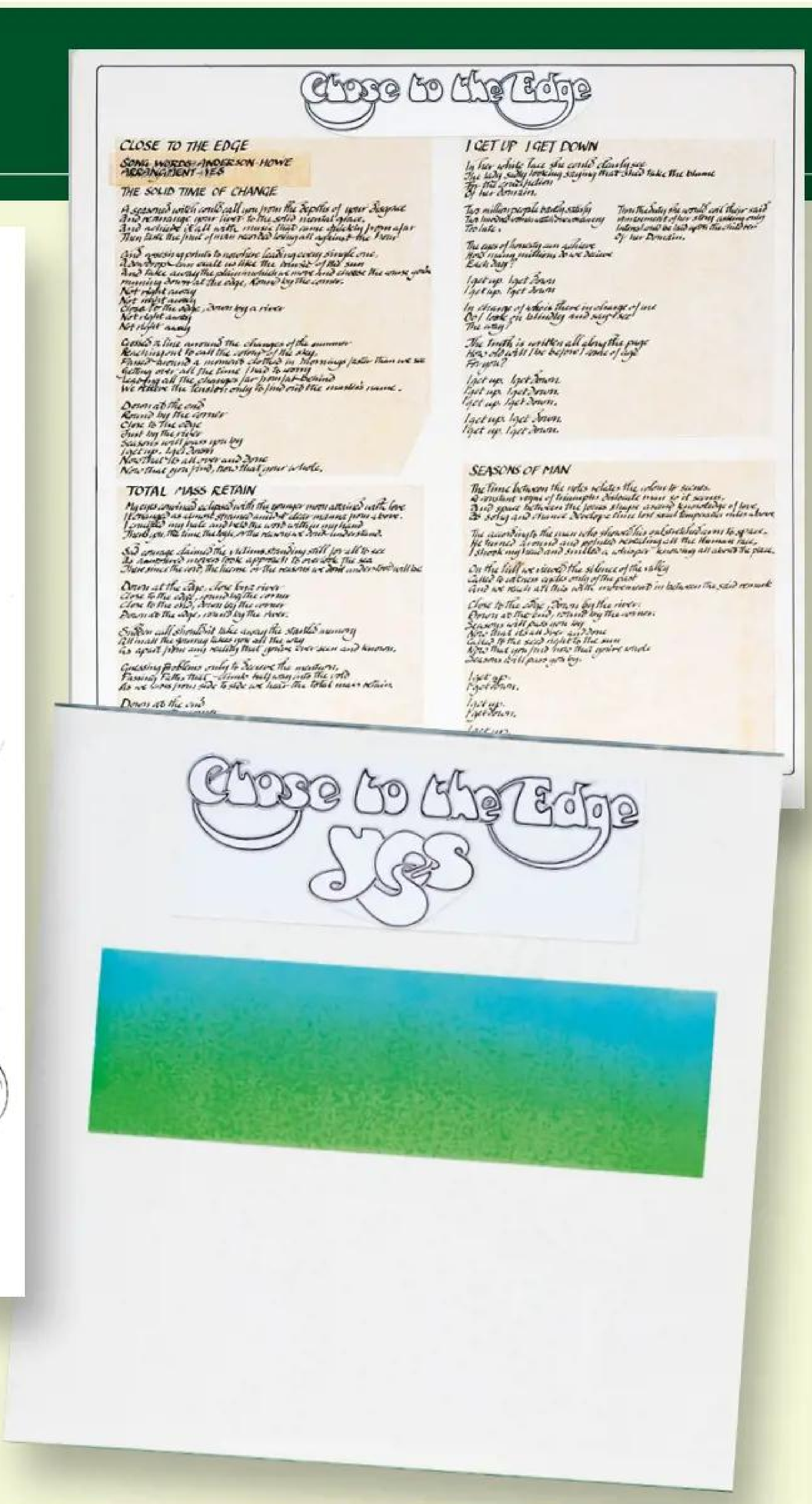


on a boat to the island and walking to the island. I guess I was designing landscapes that I felt would be really cool to visit. I love climbing, and north of Ullapool you'd see these little teeny lakes with rocky outcrops in the middle with trees on them. I discovered that the trees very often were Silver Birch, and the first Bonsai in Japan were Silver Birch found on the mountains that were naturally dwarfed.

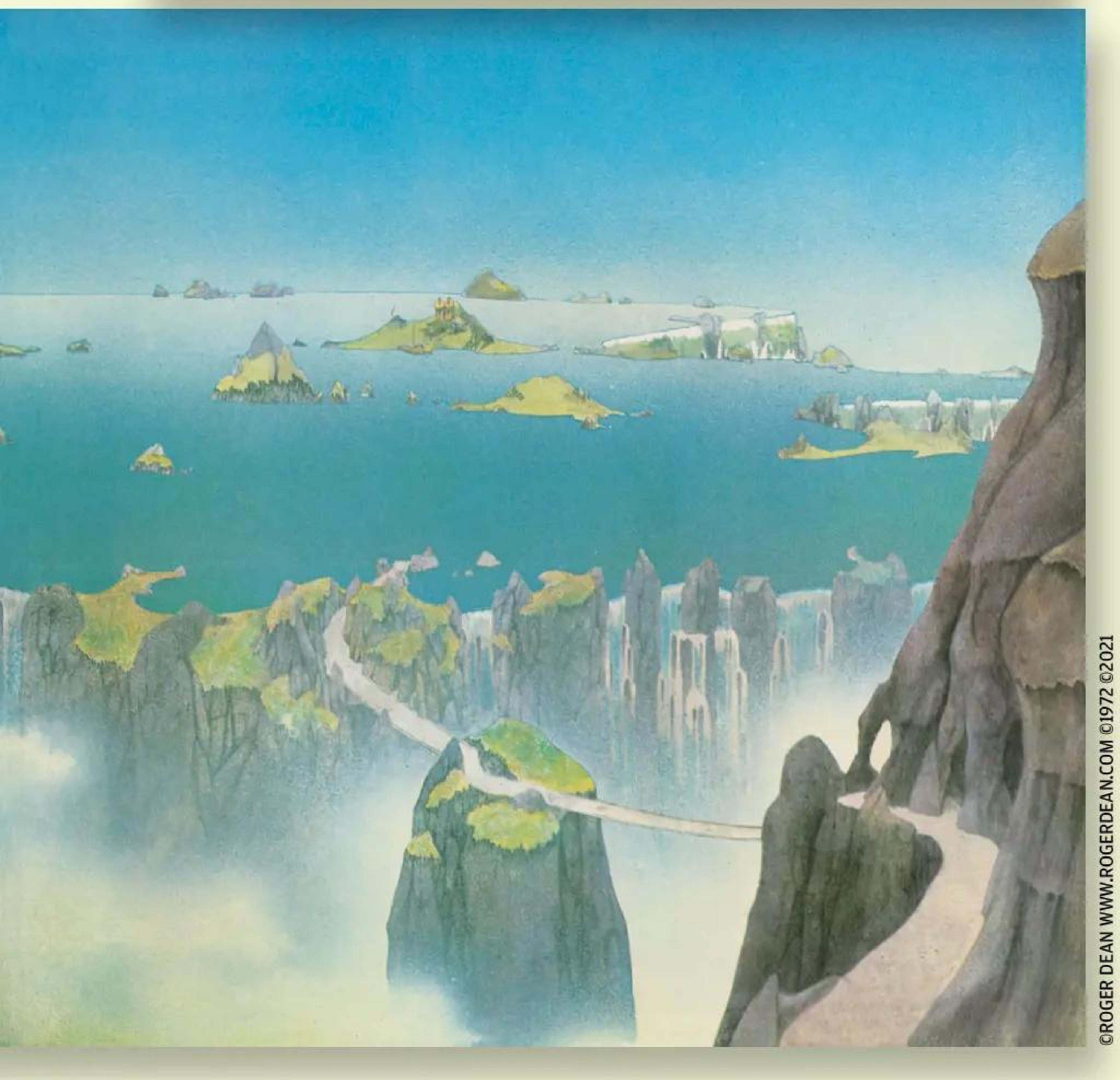
"In Scotland there was this area where it was happening naturally which had a fantastic impact. I mixed that with a trip to the English Lake District. There's a tarn on the top of the mountain, but lakes are meant to be in valleys, not the tip top of a mountain. It was powerfully inspirational for *Close To The Edge*." **SS**






Close to the Edge
CLOSE TO THE EDGE
SONG WORDS: ANDERSON-HOWE
ARRANGEMENT - YES
THE SOLID TIME OF CHANGE
I GET UP I GET DOWN
TOTAL MASS RETAIN
SEASONS OF MAN
Close to the Edge
Yes

Fantasy masterworks: some of Roger Dean's original artwork for the album cover, along with initial sketches of the now-iconic Yes logo.



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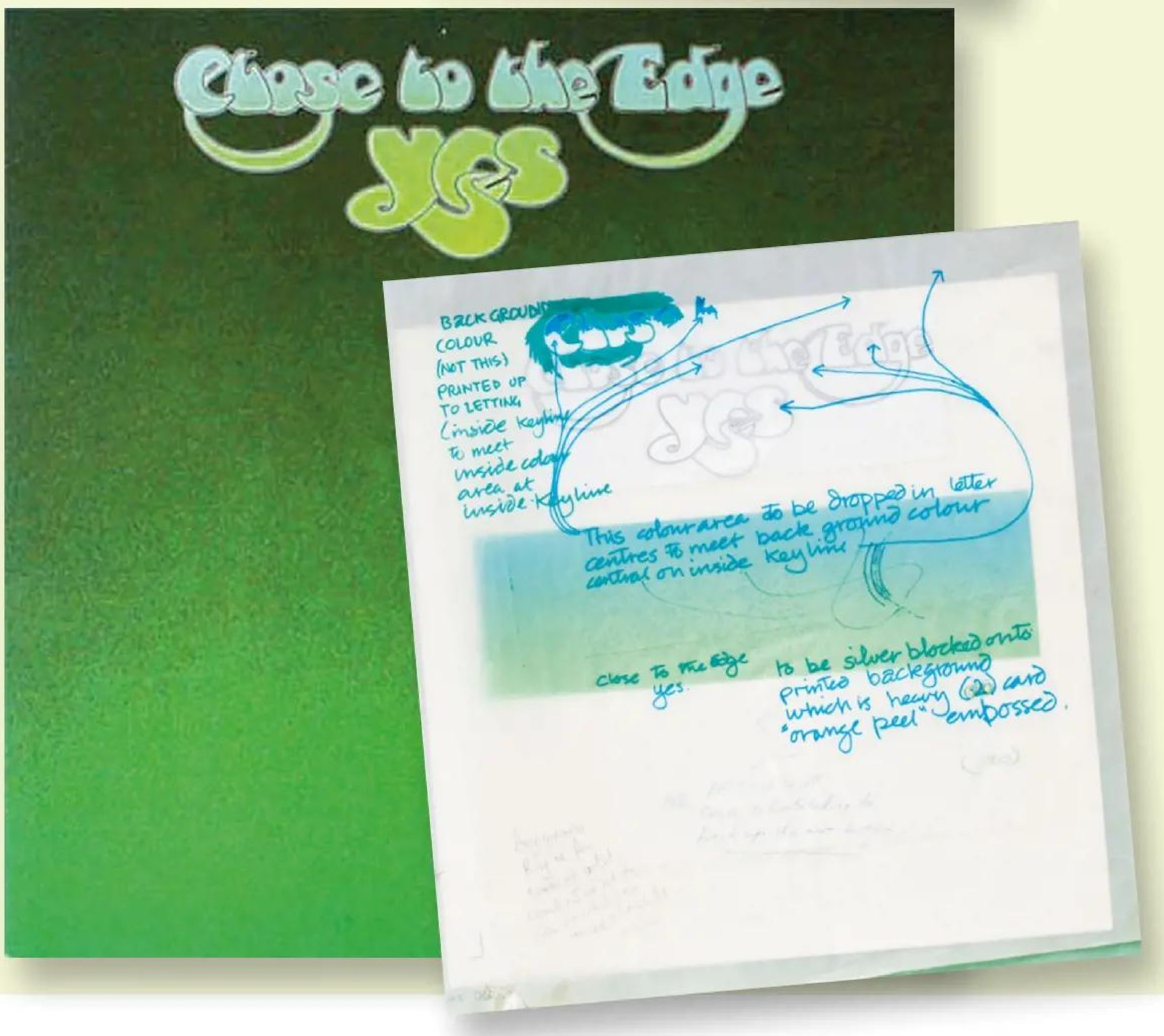
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In many respects, *CTTE*'s story begins with their previous album, *Fragile*. Bill Bruford recalls sitting by the pool at numerous American hotels and hearing *Roundabout* on heavy rotation roughly every 45 minutes on the radio. That kind of profile, with its attendant boost in sales, saw the band not only significantly increasing their following at gigs, but their stock rising exponentially within the corridors of Atlantic. It was the first time Yes started making real money, and that kind of financial clout correspondingly gave them a blank cheque when it came to creative headroom, ensuring they could pretty much do as they pleased when it came to subsequent releases.

"Ahmet Ertegun really liked us and his word stood for everything back in those days," says Chris Squire. "He'd just say to all the sales and marketing people in the record company, 'Make sure this band sells,' and the whole of Atlantic would go to work to make sure it did.

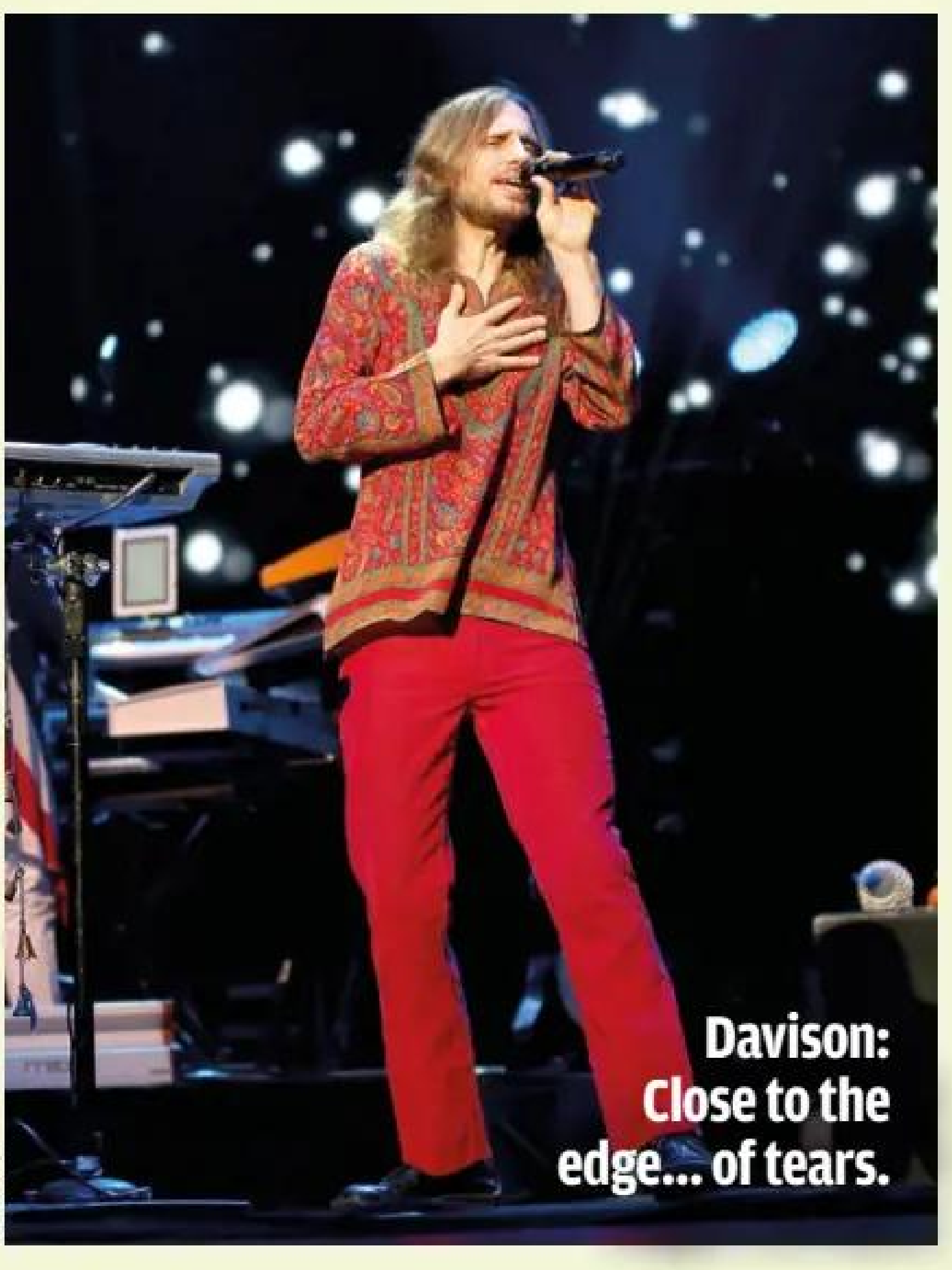
"We had that kind of advantage in those days, before things became more corporate in the record industry. That was particularly the case when it came to *Yessongs*. That was a triple album with the multi-gatefolding sleeve. All the accountants were complaining about the costs, but Ahmet shut them up and just told them that that was what we were going to do. It was fortunate for us that he was in charge."

As founder and president of Atlantic Records, Ertegun's patronage gave

"When I sing it I go weak at the knees!"

Geoff and **Jon**, the two (relatively) new Yes boys, discuss what *CTTE* means to them.

Jon Davison, vocalist with Yes since 2012, has Geddy Lee from Rush to thank for his introduction to *CTTE*. "The first thing I heard by Yes was *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* on the radio when I was 16 years old. I liked it, but I read an interview with Geddy where he talked about their earlier work, so I bought *Fragile* and *CTTE* on a 2-in-1 cassette tape!" laughs the singer. "This music was so new to me and so beyond the rock'n'roll I was hearing at the time. I didn't really understand it, but I was very intrigued at the grand story it was obviously trying to tell me. Not long after that, I bought *CTTE* on vinyl and framed the inner gatefold on my wall so I could look at it properly. The music and artwork went so well together and provided a portal to a world of imagination into which I could escape the small-town side of growing up as an awkward teenager.


Davison: Close to the edge... of tears.

GETTY

"*CTTE* is the quintessential Yes album, reflecting where they came from and also suggesting where they were going. I like the fact the lyrics aren't literal; its meaning is left open for people to interpret. My favourite part is on *And You And I*, just as it goes, *'All complete in the sight of seeds of life with you.'* The lofty, grand music is such a special moment for me. When I have to sing it, I go weak at the knees."

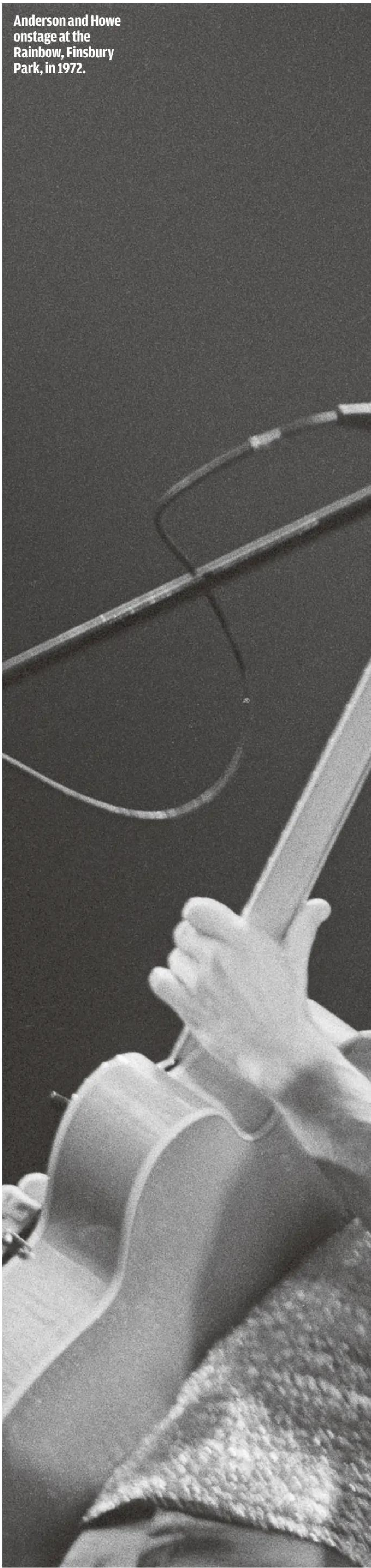
By coincidence, that section happens to be Geoff Downes' favourite moment on the album as well. "It was one of the pieces that really made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up when I first heard it, and it still does every time I play it on tour. It has that major uplifting quality, especially in that end section where Steve goes on to the pedal steel and it's all swirling around with these big major chords and Mellotrons. To me that section defined Yes's music, where they took off to another level."

Downes, who joined Yes in 1980 and again in 2011, saw Yes at Manchester's Free Trade Hall in 1971. He was already a committed fan from *Time And A Word* and then *The Yes Album*. "I was living in a communal house when I was at music college in Leeds, and I recall when *CTTE* came out it was on the turntable pretty much around the clock. When I rejoined Yes, I spent a lot of time getting the right keyboard sounds to play *CTTE* live.

"The track itself is very orchestral, and Rick Wakeman's parts very precise and defined rather than being about soloing. That's also very much my own approach to playing. It was very exciting for me to be able to look at these parts in depth, as well as being faithful to the sounds that were originally used. It's hard not to be carried away playing a piece like *CTTE*." **SS**

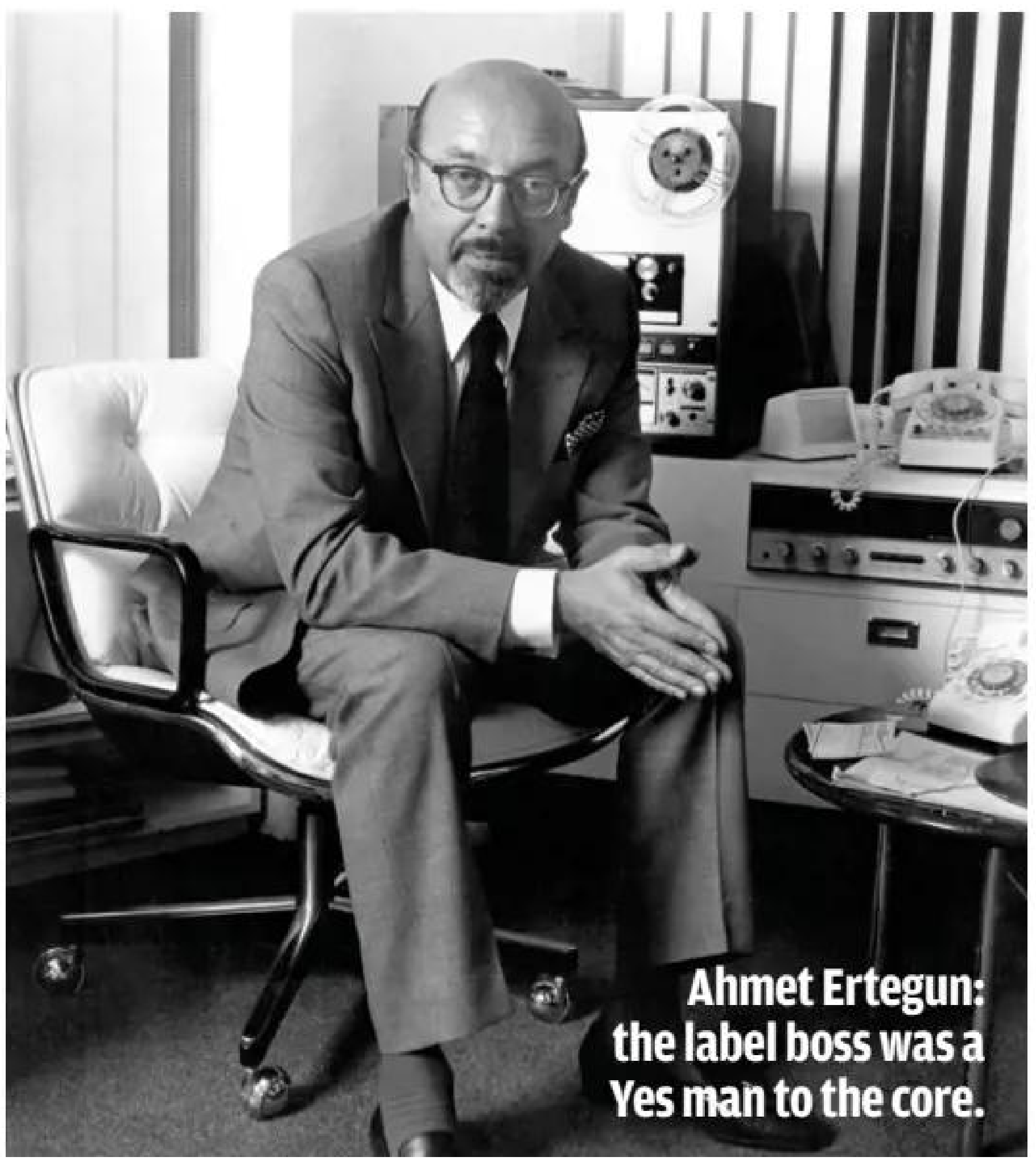
Geoff Downes: *CTTE* carries him away.

ROB MONK/FUTURE


Anderson and Howe onstage at the Rainbow, Finsbury Park, in 1972.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Yes the freedom to experiment and kept them free from interference. As Anderson reveals, "The legendary producer Jerry Wexler stopped by during the recording of *Fragile* and suggested we put a funky bass on a song we were doing at the time. I had to tell him no. We were very fortunate. Ahmet understood us and was sort of our general, right behind us, telling us to go for it. He said: 'Not many bands are doing what you're doing, going where you guys are going.'"


Ahmet Ertegun: the label boss was a Yes man to the core.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Where Yes were going from one album to the next can be viewed as a step forward from the last, a logical chain of consolidation and technical progression wherein the band gradually coalesced into a formidable unit. "We understood each other so well because we were living on tour and in the studio for at least three or four years," says Anderson, smiling at the memory. "By the time we got to *CTTE*, we were on this plane of consciousness that was really very unique, and not many groups or musicians get that chance."

Perhaps the most obvious forerunner of what was to follow *Fragile* can be found in *Heart Of The Sunrise*. At a little over 11 minutes long, it was their lengthiest track up to that point, clearly an augury of Yes' desire and intention to attempt a long-form suite. "That track was definitely the germination of the idea to do *Close*

> "Ahmet would just say to all the sales people in the record company, 'Make sure this band sells,' and the whole of Atlantic would go to work to make sure it did."
>
> **Chris Squire**

"Jon's lyrics are very individual. Even now I think 'What the hell have I been singing all these years?'"

Steve Howe

To The Edge, a piece of music that had different sections with contrasting flavours and all edited together," Squire confirms. "So after *Heart*… we decided to go for something which would last a whole side. It might have been longer, but back then you could only get 20 minutes of quality sound per side."

The barbed opening riff, partially inspired by King Crimson's *21st Century Schizoid Man*, and later rendered within the piece as a recurring guitar motif, bears some comparison with the cyclical devices that would form part of the arresting introduction on *The Solid Time Of Change*. At around the 10-minute mark, culminating in the lyric *'How can the wind with so many around me'*, the band accelerate the drama underscore in much the same way as they would in the swift-building section beneath the *'Called to the seed right to the sun /Now that you find now that you're whole'* lyric at the very climax of *CTTE*.

Steve Howe recalls that much of what would be included on *CTTE* came from quickly grasped writing sessions as the band travelled around the USA. "Jon and I had written *Roundabout* together on the road, and so we'd meet up and I'd play him things. I have a lot of cassettes of Jon and I sitting in places like New York or Cincinnati, recording songs. Jon would say to me: 'What have you got that's a bit like…?' So I play him something and he'd go: 'That's great. Have you got anything else?' And I play him another tune.

"I had more chords than I needed and he had more words than he knew what to do with. We didn't have any verses at that point, but I did have the *In Her White Lace* song which, at that point, had kind of jazzy chords really."

Anderson vividly remembers the moment when Howe first played him that particular tune. "I had this lyric and melody – '*Two million people barely satisfied.*' I had my head to the ground about what was happening around the world, starvation in African countries and a world where so many people lived so well and so many people didn't. I get high and low on the whole concept of life. Then when Steve was singing the song he'd originally written using those same chords, *'In her white lace,'* I immediately said he should sing his song against what I was singing."

Returning from over 100 dates criss-crossing America at the end of March 1972, a tired but up-for-it Yes eventually hunkered down in the basement of the Una Billings School Of Dance in Shepherd's Bush in May. At that point Yes were already being booked into gigs that would hold well over 20,000 adoring fans. That kind of ambition brought its own momentum, a sense that if the venues were going to be much bigger then the music had to be of sufficient scale that it would match the occasion.

Piecing together the various parts of the aural jigsaw that had accrued over the previous weeks and months in hotels, soundchecks and rehearsal rooms wasn't an easy job, but it's a testament both to Anderson's visionary skills in conceiving the shape and form the new album should take, and the interpretative abilities of his colleagues to be able to run with what were often presented as sketchy ideas into something substantive and real.

Outside of his partnership with Howe, Anderson's nearest influences upon the writing of the album, and the side-long epic in particular, were typically catholic in scope. His reading material at the time was *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse. Having been adopted by the anti-materialist elements within the 60s counter-culture which Anderson eagerly embraced, the book, in dealing with the search for spiritual enlightenment, appealed to the autodidactic tendencies of the singer.

Again and again in Hesse's prose, the symbolism of the river is a prominent and recurring theme. "…the river is everywhere at once, at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the rapids, in the sea, in the mountains, everywhere at once…"

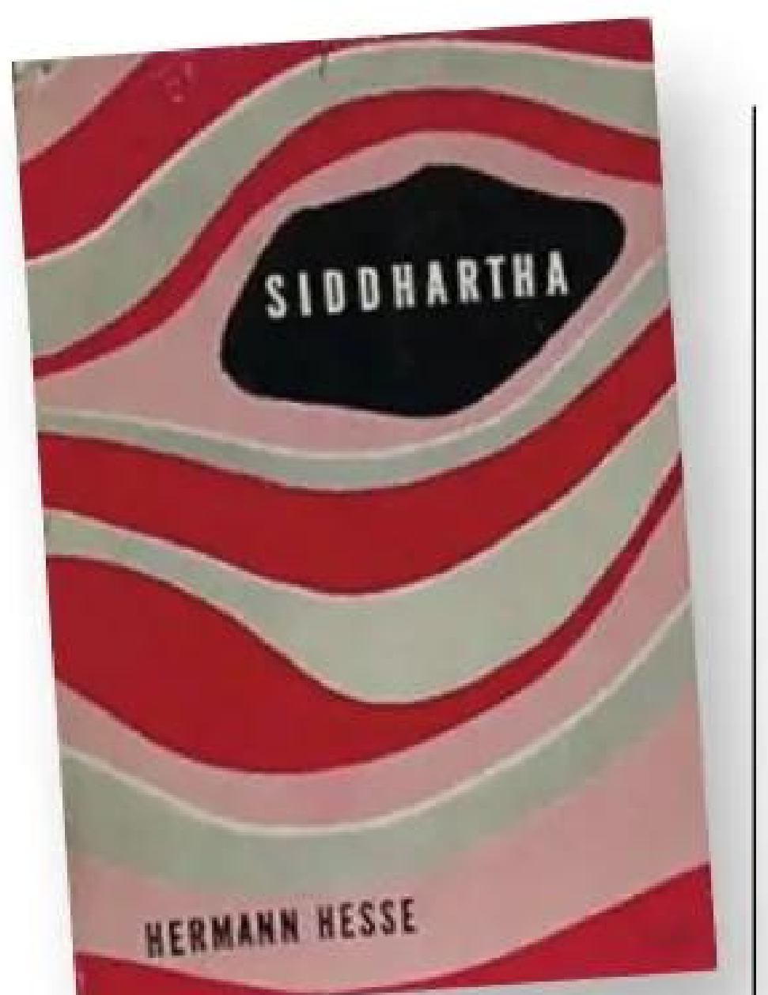
In the States, Anderson had spent a lot of time listening to the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, and in particular his fifth symphony, written in 1915. "It's got a very wild first movement and a gentle second movement. The third movement is very majestic."

It wasn't the themes or the music that snared Anderson's attention as such, but rather the structure. "My feeling was that I thought the band could get into performing that sort of musical positioning."

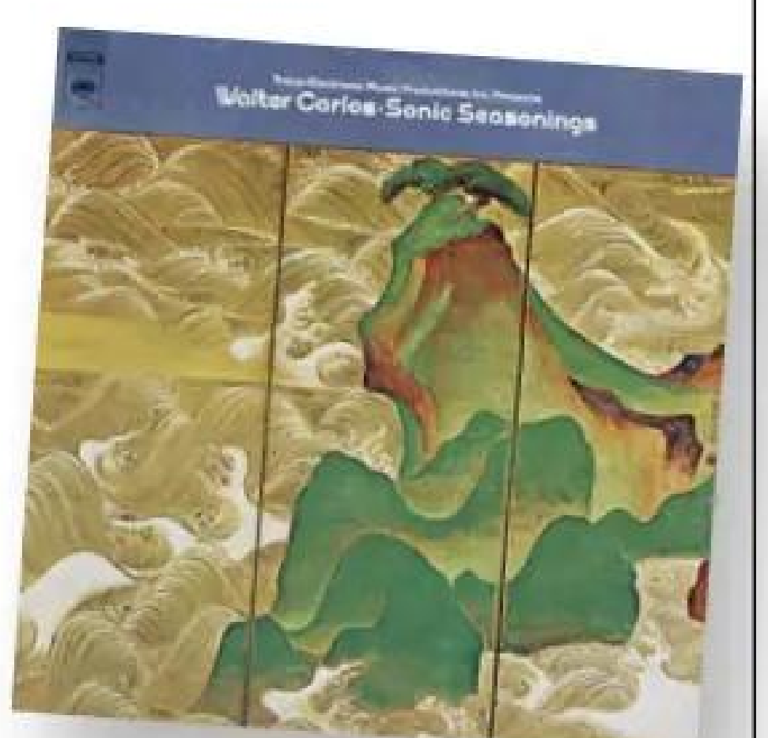
Another inspirational source that had a direct impact on the next album from Yes was drawn from Walter (later Wendy) Carlos' recently released *Sonic Seasonings*. Combining field recordings with atmospheres augmented by moods and melodies played on the Moog, the double album was one of the groundbreaking recordings in electronic music and a precursor of what would become ambient music.

When it came to recording *CTTE* at Advision studios, Anderson explained to producer and unofficial sixth band member Eddy Offord how he envisaged the piece emerging from a musique concrète beginning.

Portrait of the artists: That *CTTE* line-up of Bill Bruford, Rick Wakeman, Chris Squire, Steve Howe and Jon Anderson.



***Siddhartha*: Hermann Hesse's counter-culture classic novel was a key influence on Anderson.**



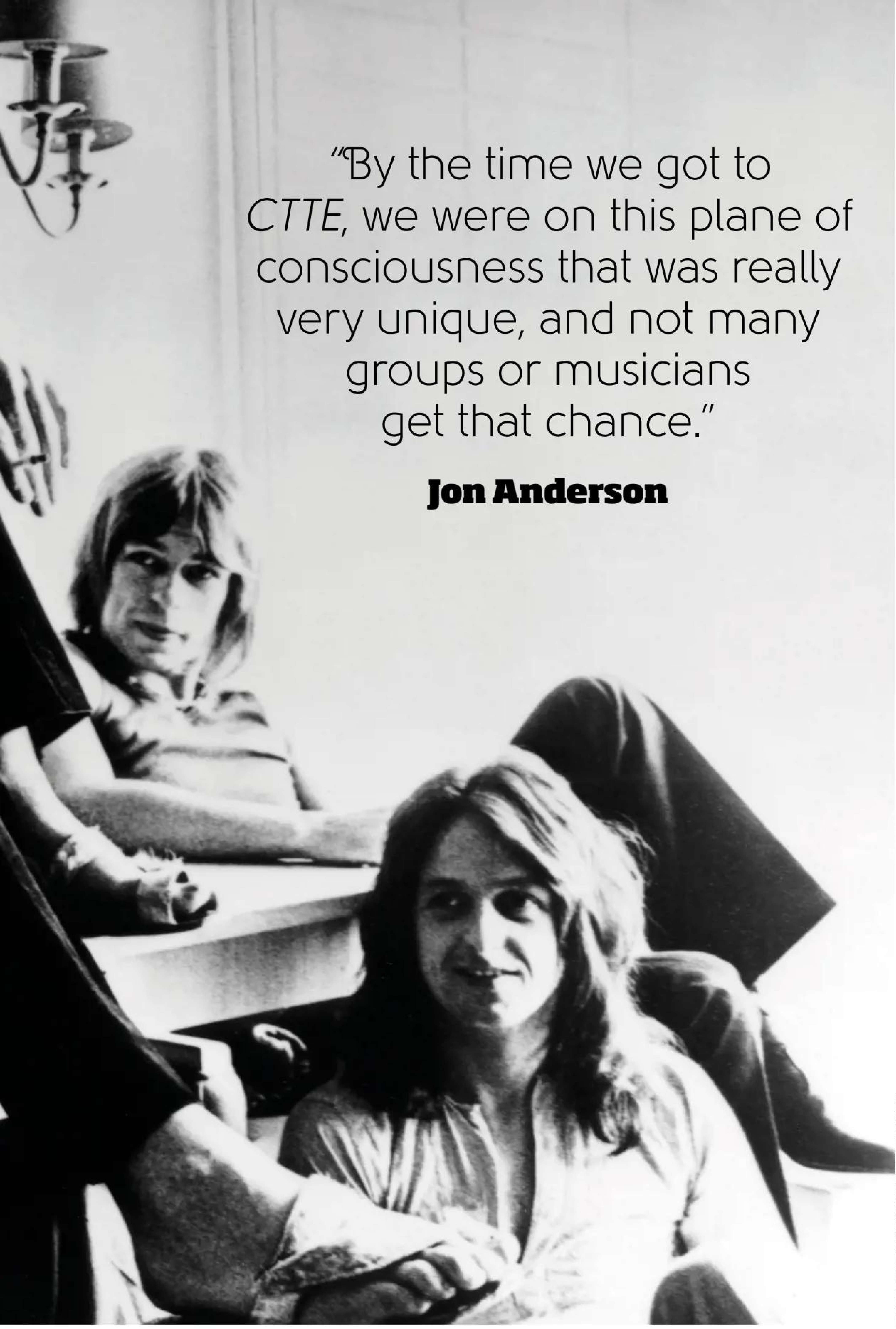
Proto-ambience: *Sonic Seasonings* by Walter Carlos informed Yes' sound on *CTTE*.

"I had this idea of a wild introduction, coming out of a vast soundscape. I spoke more to Eddy about creating a soundscape. Before the band started, I wanted to create this energy or force field and then have the band climb out of it with a wild, crazy solo section, raving away as though we didn't know where we were going. The idea was very simple. You get to a certain point and you're going to stop dead and a vocal idea would come in — a very straight choral thing — and then the band would carry on again."

> "I wouldn't say we were influenced by the Mahavishnu Orchestra directly, but we were all full of admiration and respect for them."
>
> **Steve Howe**

The opening guitar solo has little to do with the mainstream rock soloing of the day. Despite all the departures and innovations from various guitarists in many other fields and disciplines that have followed since its recording, Howe's frantic scrabble across the fretboard remains an astonishing feat, at once manic and fevered, yet clearly undertaken with a cool and practised precision. "I wouldn't say we were influenced by the Mahavishnu Orchestra directly, but we were all full of admiration and respect for them. It was that way-out jazz side of things we were drawing on. Bill's got jazz roots and so have I. We didn't want to play jazz standards, but rather our own version of rock and jazz."

Every bit as challenging is the blizzard of information coursing through Wakeman's scurrying keyboard motifs. "I wanted something



CHARLIE GILLETT/REDFERNS/ GETTY IMAGES

> "By the time we got to *CTTE*, we were on this plane of consciousness that was really very unique, and not many groups or musicians get that chance."
>
> **Jon Anderson**

that sounded like it had a pattern to it, but would never come around to its origin when you'd expect it to. Interestingly enough, in the verses there's a single staccato organ note that's actually morse code. I'll leave it to your readers to work it out!"

The Solid Time Of Change was in part seeded from Howe's past. "One of my songs had the line *'Close to the edge, down by the river'* which actually referred to where I was living at the time, next to the River Thames."

When Anderson heard the phrase, the symbolism of the river immediately connected to metaphors within *Siddhartha*. "The river leads you to the ocean, all the paths lead you to the divine. So the idea was that as human beings we are close to the edge – the edge of realisation, whatever anybody else might want to think."

Indeed, Anderson's use of lyrics for the sound and rhythm of the word, as opposed to their meaning, had been developing apace since 1971's *The Yes Album* where his lyrics slowly moved from obvious or literal interpretations towards an opaque but poetic form. "Jon's lyrics were very individual, and even now I just ponder on them and think, 'What the hell have I just been singing all these years?'" Howe admits.

The track is more than a reward for the collective effort that went into its meticulously crafted soundworld. From its combative opening, through the dense, percussive, chant-like choruses, into the sumptuous cathedral-like underworld and emerging out in the dazzling panorama, the pay-off at the coda is stunning.

"That big end section, climbing the mountain, like where you get to sit back and take in the view… my head spun every time I listened to it or sang it," says Anderson breathlessly.

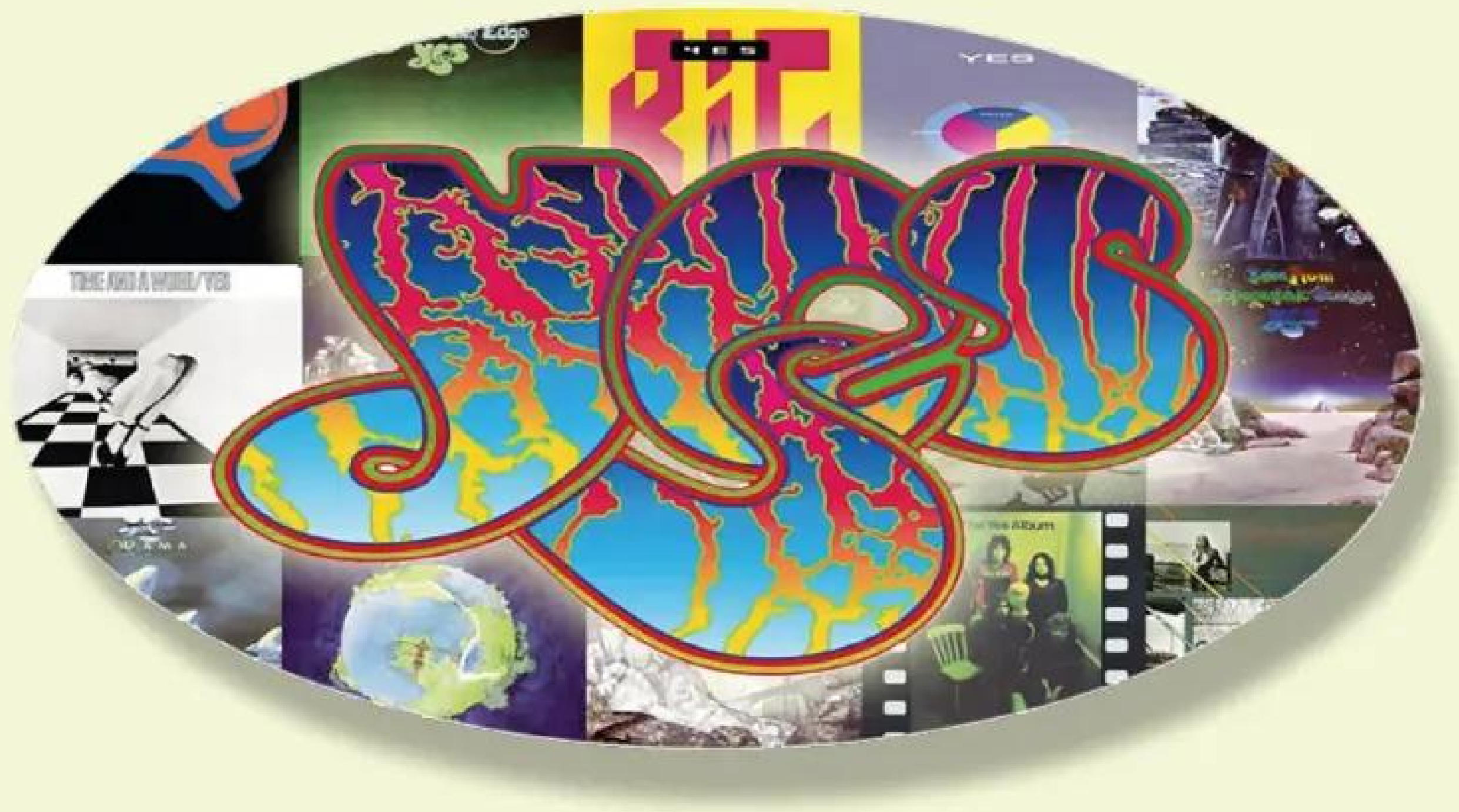
"When we started touring it, we had to drop that end section a tone below in F," comments Howe. "To this day I think how Jon sung it originally in the studio in G minor is just amazing."

Wakeman agrees: "The way it grows to an almost impossible crescendo of sound to then suddenly die away, leaving a backdrop for Jon to sing over the last few bars is quite magical."

Yes' penchant for a yearning romanticism had long been part of their repertoire. In *And You And I,* for example, it's just possible to discern a trace memory of Anderson's earnest paean *Yesterday And Today* that had graced their 1969 debut. Indeed, the phase effects through which the layered chorus of vocals are processed contain a stylistic echo from their earlier experimentation with the technique on *Astral Traveller* from 1970's *Time And A Word*. However, nothing in the back catalogue was anything like as sweepingly majestic or grand as this. Though it had simple

A Boxful Of Bonuses!

Your guide to Yes' career-spanning box set...



The Studio Albums 1969-1987 featured all 12 Yes studio albums recorded for the Atlantic label and comes with brand new art from Roger Dean. Each disc contains a wealth of bonus materials - in the case of *Big Generator*, bonus tracks that were previously only available in Japan. So, those bonus tracks in full:

Yes – *Everydays* (single version), *Dear Father* (early version 2), *Something's Coming*, *Everydays* (early version), *Dear Father* (early version 1), *Something's Coming* (early version)

Time And A Word – *Dear Father*, *No Opportunity Necessary, No Experience Needed* (original mix), *Sweet Dreams* (original mix), *The Prophet* (single version)

The Yes Album – *Your Move* (single version), *Starship Trooper: Life Seeker* (single version), *Clap* (studio version)

Fragile – *America*, *Roundabout* (early rough mix)

Close To The Edge – *America* (single version), *Total Mass Retain* (single version), *And You And I* (alternate version), *Siberia* (studio run through of *Siberian Khatru*)

Tales From Topographic Oceans – *Dance Of The Dawn* (studio run-through), *Giants Under The Sun* (studio run-through)

Relayer – *Soon* (single edit), *Sound Chaser* (single edit), *The Gates Of Delerium* (studio run-through)

Going For The One – *Montreux's Theme*, *Vevey* (Revisited), *Amazing Grace*, *Going For The One* (rehearsal), *Parallels* (rehearsal), *Turn Of The Century* (rehearsal), *Eastern Numbers* (early version of *Awaken*)

Tormato – *Abilene*, *Money*, *Picasso*, *Some Are Born*, *You Can Be Saved*, *High*, *Days* (demo), *Countryside*, *Everybody's Song* (early version of *Does It Really Happen*)

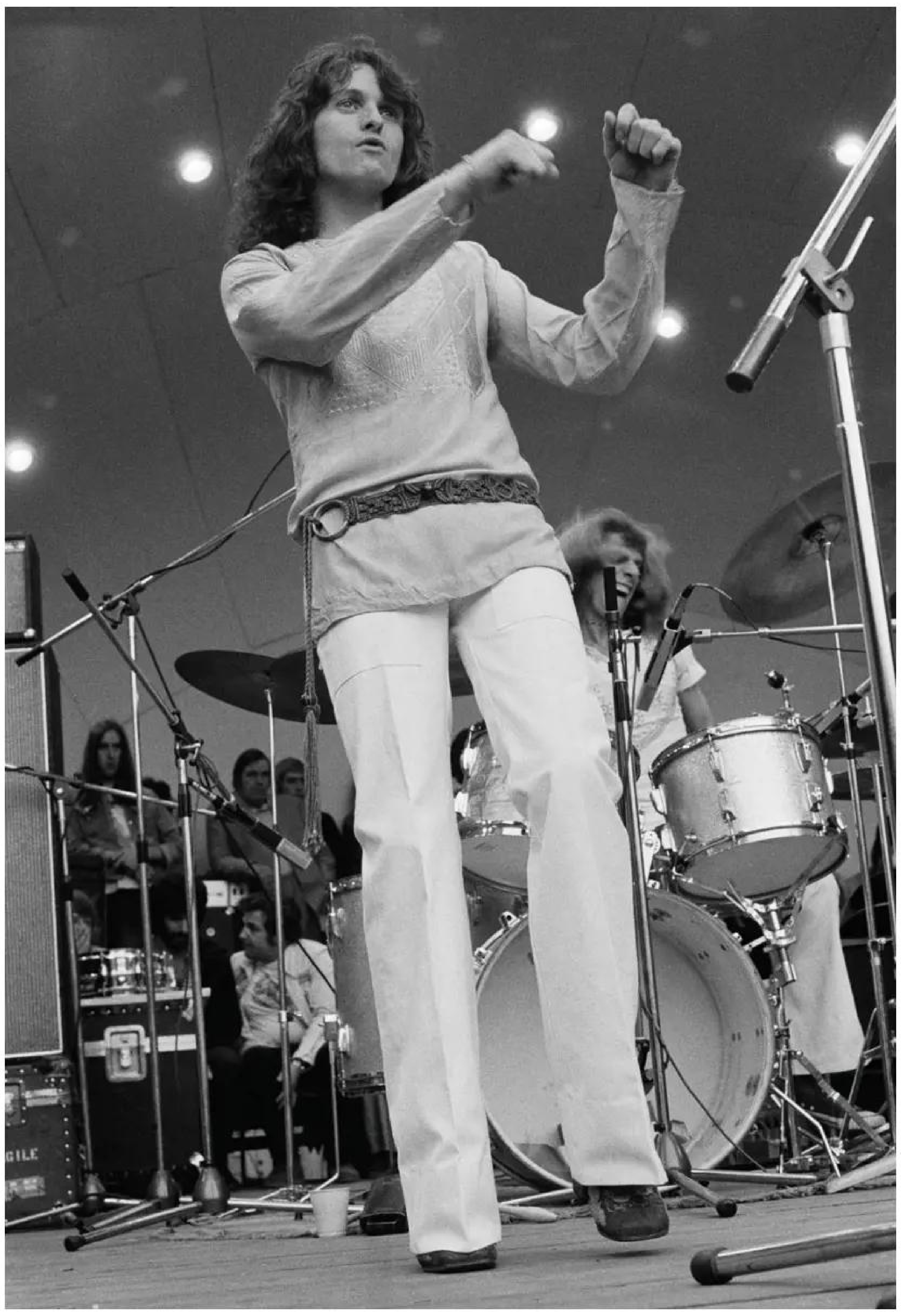
Drama – *Into The Lens (I Am A Camera)* (single version), *Run Through The Light* (single version), *Have We Really Got To Go Through This*, *Song No.4 (Satellite)*, *Tempus Fugit* (tracking session), *White Car* (tracking session) *Dancing Through The Light*, *Golden Age*, *In The Tower*, *Friend Of A Friend*

90125 – *Leave It* (single remix), *Make It Easy*, *It Can Happen* (Cinema version), *It's Over*, *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* (extended) *Leave It* (a capella)

Big Generator – *Love Will Find A Way* (edit) *Love Will Find A Way* (extended), *Rhythm Of Love* (x3 - Dance To The Rhythm mix/Move To The Rhythm mix/The Rhythm Of Dub). **JE**

“Interestingly enough, in the verses there’s a single staccato organ note that’s actually Morse code. I’ll leave it to your readers to work it out!”

Rick Wakeman on the track *CTTE*


MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Jon Anderson, with new drummer Alan White, at the Crystal Palace Bowl in 1972.

enough origins, it was to prove one of the most difficult tracks to complete.

"All I kept saying to Rick was: 'We've got to create a theme, it's got to get bigger,'" says Anderson. "We'd sing ideas to each other to try and come up with something. He suggested modulating it, changing key. *I* didn't know how to do that but *they* knew."

Bruford has nothing but praise for Wakeman's skill as an arranger. "He was terrific. If you had a problem, you went to Rick. You'd say: 'I've got this thing and it's going really well, but it won't fit this thing over here, which is also good, and we'd like to use it, but when we bang the two together it doesn't work.' There'd be a little modulation, a clever tempo thing, and before you knew it, you'd moved to the sunny uplands. He'd smooth over the joins so you didn't see it. You'd say to him: 'How on earth did you do that?' Really clever stuff."

Wakeman is justifiably proud of his contribution. "It was a joy for me playing my part in glueing all the bits together so it worked."

If the beginning of the album was an outstanding triumph for Yes, its ending was no less dramatic. *Siberian Khatru* compresses almost everything they'd learned to date and every last second is brimming with ideas.

"We were aiming to be more orchestral and not sticking to so-called boundaries of what instruments to use," says Wakeman of the decision to use a harpsichord for an exhilarating run. "The late Thomas Goff built the finest harpsichords, and he came to Advision to oversee the setting up of his instrument, even instructing Eddy Offord on the best way to mic and record it. I always felt that just because an instrument was perhaps labelled as doing a particular job and a particular kind of music, that that didn't mean you couldn't think outside of the box. Rules are there to be broken."

At around seven minutes, everything abruptly stops. Above a throbbing bass, the cogs and wheels of the collective group are heard turning. "We stole a bit from Stravinsky by having that pounding staccato and at the same time throwing those accents on voice and drums, with me driving through it with that constant guitar motif. It's a good example of hi-tech arranging circa 1972," says Howe.

The completed album represented another significant milestone in Yes's career, signalling as it did the end of what many still regard as the definitive formation of the band. On the last day of mixing *CTTE*, Bruford asked Wakeman to have a coffee with him. "He told me first that he was leaving," Wakeman says. "We were very close, our ages are just one day apart. I loved the playing, ideas and discipline he bought to Yes. I was gutted but fully respected his decision."

Bruford's departure was seeded after a conversation with Robert Fripp earlier in the year in Boston when King Crimson supported Yes. During the recording of *CTTE*, Bruford, by his own admission, behaved badly.

"With the benefit of hindsight I'm not sure that I was the easiest guy to work with, nor am I particularly proud of the way I conducted myself around that age. I'd just turned 23. I was very impetuous, keen to get the job done, always thought I probably knew better. So that was one fifth of the mix of other people who probably thought something similar, making for a combustible kind of time. I think for a long time Chris probably thought that I'd been spirited off by Robert and over-influenced by him."

Squire admits the departure coloured his view of *CTTE*. "It made finishing the album a bittersweet experience. Bill leaving for King Crimson was always the strangest thing to me at the time, especially as we were doing so well. It was confusing really. Of course, we ended up with Alan White and he's been with us ever since, so it didn't work out too badly."

Unlike any other Yes album, the listener is propelled on an adventure which never deviates or lets up. The degree of control and the extent to which it is sustained is unrivalled not only within the Yes catalogue, but beyond to the work of their contemporaries. It's not surprising that the album is routinely hailed as an all-time classic, and its members have recently endorsed a new stereo and 5.1 surround sound mix by Steven Wilson – a musician who acknowledges his own debt to their work.

Looking back on the 41 years since it was made, Bruford, who once described it as "torture to make but a masterpiece nevertheless" thinks of it as an album whose value will only increase. "Never mind 40 years ago. In 40 years' time, along with three or four other albums from that era, people will pick out *Close To The Edge* and say, 'That's what progressive rock was all about.'"

PRESS

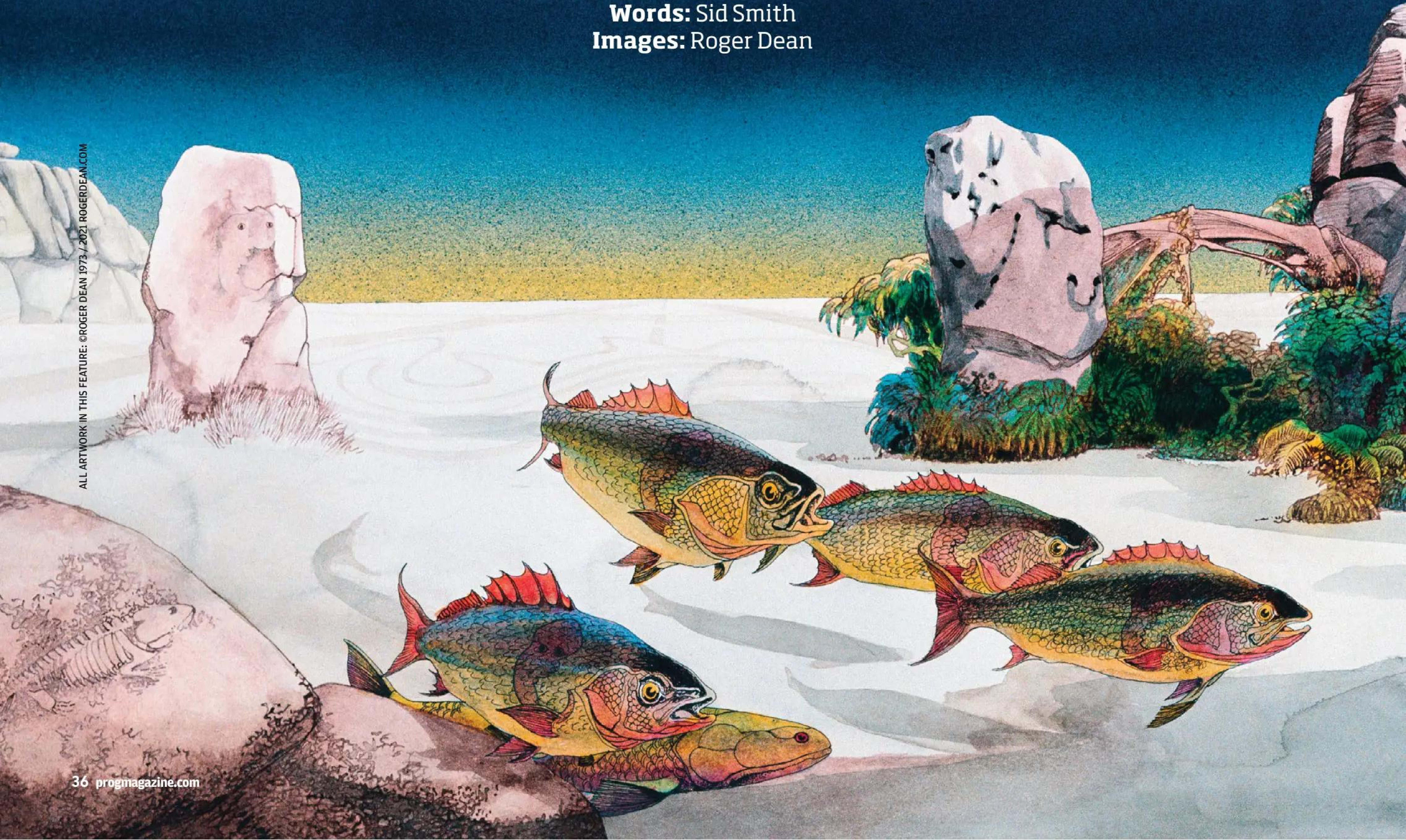
Over the edge: Bill Bruford (second from left) with King Crimson. "I'm not proud of the way I conducted myself," he says.

MAIN: GETTY

"Pure Hardcore Yes"

From the influence of an Indian guru to the loss of Rick Wakeman, *Prog* takes an in-depth look into the making of **Yes**' opinion-dividing sixth album, *Tales From Topographic Oceans*.

Words: Sid Smith
Images: Roger Dean



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"I actually wanted to record *Tales From Topographic Oceans* in a tent in this beautiful wood that I'd found, miles from anywhere. I thought we could bury a generator 300 yards away under the ground so we could have electricity in the tent. We'd be able to record there and have all these natural sounds around us. That's where my brain was at at that time. Of course, they thought I was totally crazy!" laughs Jon Anderson.

"Crazy" turned out to be one of the nicer things said about the sixth Yes studio album upon its release in December 1973. Although achieving Gold status on both sides of the Atlantic, it received a mauling from many critics. When the band played the four-sided opus live, many fans found it a challenge. But challenge is exactly what Yes thrived on. Always a band on a mission and in a hurry to push forward, Yes were keen to do whatever was in their power to be at the forefront of a musical movement where nothing that was worth anything stood still for very long.

Chris Squire observed that the build-up to *Tales…* had been going on for some time, with *Heart Of The Sunrise* marking the realisation of an ambition to produce something on a much bigger scale. With *Close To The Edge*, they went bigger still. An epic release, it meshed adventurous solo excursions with tightly knit arrangements. The punch Yes delivered came not from a single source but rather their collective force. Anderson was determined their music should avoid showboating licks for their own sake. "There were a lot of bands up there soloing forever but that wasn't what I wanted to do. I wanted to create music that had length and breadth and adventure, that would carry the audience through this experience. With lights and staging, you could take them on a journey."

They say a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. *Tales From Topographic Oceans* began with a single conversation between two characters at very different ends of the musical spectrum. There, in Bill Bruford's London flat in early March 1973, along with dozens of other friends celebrating Bruford's wedding earlier in the day, Jon Anderson sat perched on an open windowsill talking with Jamie Muir. "He was an unbelievable stage performer," says Anderson of the eccentric King Crimson percussionist, known at the time for wearing bearskins, spitting blood capsules from his mouth and flailing his percussion rig and packing cases with heavy chains. "I wanted to know what made him do that, what had influenced him."

Muir enthused about *Autobiography Of A Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda. The guru, who'd died in 1952, was well-known in esoteric circles, and had also made a more secular cameo appearance on the cover of The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, wedged between HG Wells and James Joyce. Reading Yogananda's words, Muir told the singer, had had a profound impact upon him. "He said to me, 'Here, read it,' and it started me off on the path of becoming aware that there was even a path," says Anderson. "Jamie was like a messenger for me and came to me at the perfect time in my life… he changed my life."

It was powerful stuff. Reading the book prompted Muir to quit music and become a Buddhist monk, and while the effect upon Anderson may not have been so extreme, it was the catalyst that took Yes into uncharted waters.

Discovering a reference to the different levels and divisions within Hindu scriptures in a footnote led to a 'Eureka!' moment for Anderson as the group toured Japan. Convinced he'd found the structural framework within which to place the large-scale ideas and concepts he'd been mulling over, he found a willing ally in Steve Howe. Having written *Roundabout* and *Close To The Edge* together, there was a real bond between the pair.

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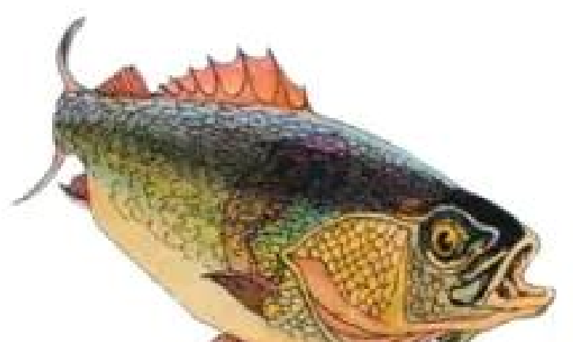
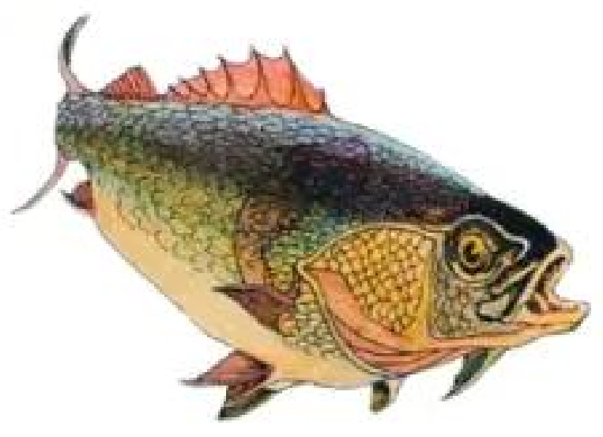
Anderson and Howe on the *Tales…* tour of the US, 1974.



"I wanted to create music that had length and breadth and adventure that would carry the audience through this experience."

Jon Anderson



"We were really up for the big, challenging things like, 'Let's do an album with four *Close To The Edges*,'" laughs the guitarist.

Over several post-gig evenings in candlelit hotel rooms, locked away from all the usual distractions from life on the road, they trawled through a huge accumulated array of musical sketches and motifs, searching for pieces to complement Anderson's thematic ideas.

"I've a lot of cassettes of Jon and I sitting in places like New York or Cincinnati recording songs," recalls Howe. "Jon would say to me, 'What have you got that's a bit like that…' so I'd play him something and he'd go, 'That's great. Have you got anything else?' and I'd play him another tune. I notice that one of the pieces he turned down early on eventually became part of side three. He heard it later and said, 'That's a good piece,' because we were looking for something different then."

At the end of a marathon all-night writing session in Savannah, Georgia, the basic themes and broad outline of the next Yes project had finally coalesced. Alan White recalls them presenting their deliberations to the rest of the group. "I thought it was great. The band wanted to make a big statement here worldwide. We had this whole story, you know?"

Howe remembers a slightly more cautious reception. "Some guys in the band were like, 'Hold on a minute.' They were fine with a double album but were, you know, 'Just *four* songs?' But Jon and I did manage to sell the idea."

If the starting point of *Tales…* had come about when the paths of Yes and King Crimson had accidentally crossed at a party, the next stage in the story found Yes indebted to another part of the prog spectrum: Emerson Lake And Palmer and their Manticore Studios, based in an old converted cinema in Fulham. Over several weeks in the summer of 1973, occupying the main stage at the rehearsal complex, they got to grips with fragments, sketches and outlines. In some respects, this was business as usual for the group. Countless times in their history, Yes had sewn together different musical elements.

Never the easiest of jobs, the arrival of Wakeman in 1971, who understood the nuts and bolts of the music, had improved the pace with which loose ends and threads might be put to use or dispatched. If things weren't quite so quick this time, it came down in part at least to the sheer scale of the task. Nailing one track can be hard enough. Trying to map out four, each lasting the side of an album, was enough to give even the most enthusiastic in the band pause for thought. The logistics of creating a piece that would go through several distinct transformations over 20 minutes was a formidable prospect even for a group with *Close To The Edge* under their belt.

Likening the process to climbing a mountain, Anderson argues, "Sometimes you need someone to say, 'This is where we're going to go; we're going to make it, we've done it before. Don't worry, it'll be okay.' If you wait for everyone else to arrive at a decision, we'd still be climbing the mountain!"

He readily admits he was frequently overbearing during the writing and rehearsals, chivvying his bandmates along, trying to keep people focused. "So many things happened in that two-and-a-half-month period. In rehearsal I tended to know exactly where we were going, to a point. I knew there were going to be some solos from Steve, and in the first movement there were solos from Rick, and in the second movement. In the third movement there'd be solos from Chris and, especially the fourth movement, a lot of drums. I had such great faith in doing it."

That faith was something shared by Howe. It was tough going, he admits, but there was a sense that there lay an unprecedented opportunity before the group, provided they were able to keep their nerve.

"As hard as it was, and it was hard, nobody wanted to bottle out of what we'd committed ourselves to do. We just knew we had a big landscape we could explore. Side one set the scene so much. It was showing that we wanted to use some themes but use them in different ways. It was quite plain what we were doing.

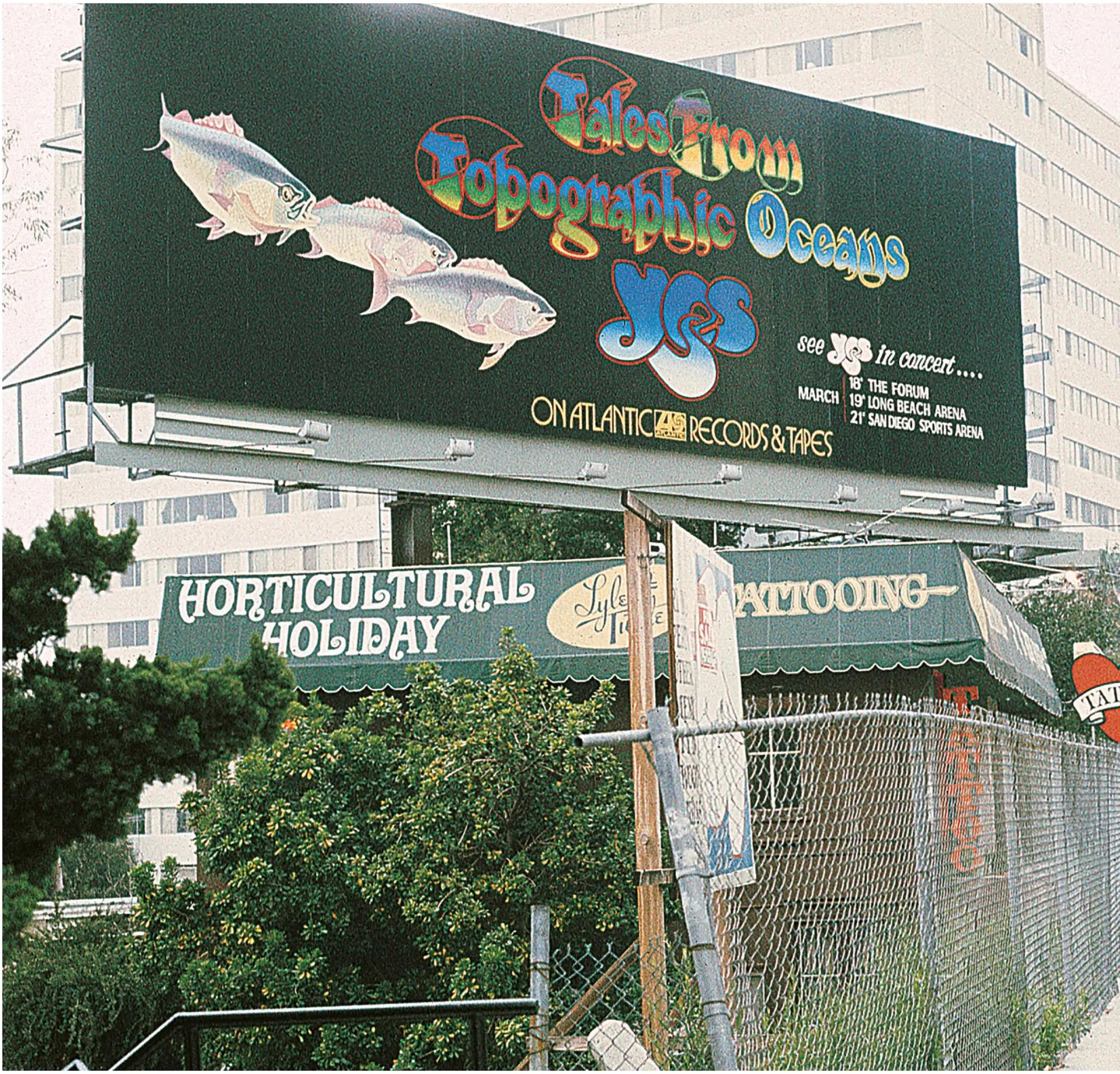
"By the time we got to the second side, I think we really wanted to go off somewhere else altogether if we could. There's folky bits where I'm playing lute and we got very light and spry, which is its own dynamic. We could really stretch out and no less so than on side three, when most of the beginning is a stretch-out of some mad, really quite wacky ideas – some quite Stravinsky, some quite folky. With *Leaves Of Green* you get back to the roots of our music. There's almost a Renaissance period that we play at the end of side three. To close, we had to do something that was going to be bigger than big. We felt that with what we had constructed we had a beautiful song, *Nous Sommes Du Soleil*, and there was a use of theme again that we did nicely I think."

Anderson recalls being eager to get started as early as possible because they had so much to get through, though not everyone in the group shared that particular body clock. "It's a known fact that Chris Squire never wanted to play music before midday," laughs Alan White. "We'd spend all day going over things and we'd get to dinner time and then get some rest. There was some trial and error initially. It was a collection of lots of pieces of music that we had carrying the story. We had to find a way of joining the jigsaw puzzle together to make it work."

With much of that puzzle now in place, albeit somewhat loosely, Yes transferred to Morgan Studios in Willesden. Its urban location, on a busy road with heavy traffic, was about as far away from the countryside idyll Jon Anderson had originally envisaged for the recording as you could get. However, on the plus side, it boasted a 24-track desk that was more than capable of containing the

This oceanic feeling: Yes in 1973, outside ELP's Manticore Studios.

BARRIE WENTZELL PHOTOGRAPHY


Tales From
Topographic Oceans
YES
see YES in concert....
MARCH
18th THE FORUM
19th LONG BEACH ARENA
21st SAN DIEGO SPORTS ARENA
ON ATLANTIC RECORDS & TAPES
HORTICULTURAL
HOLIDAY
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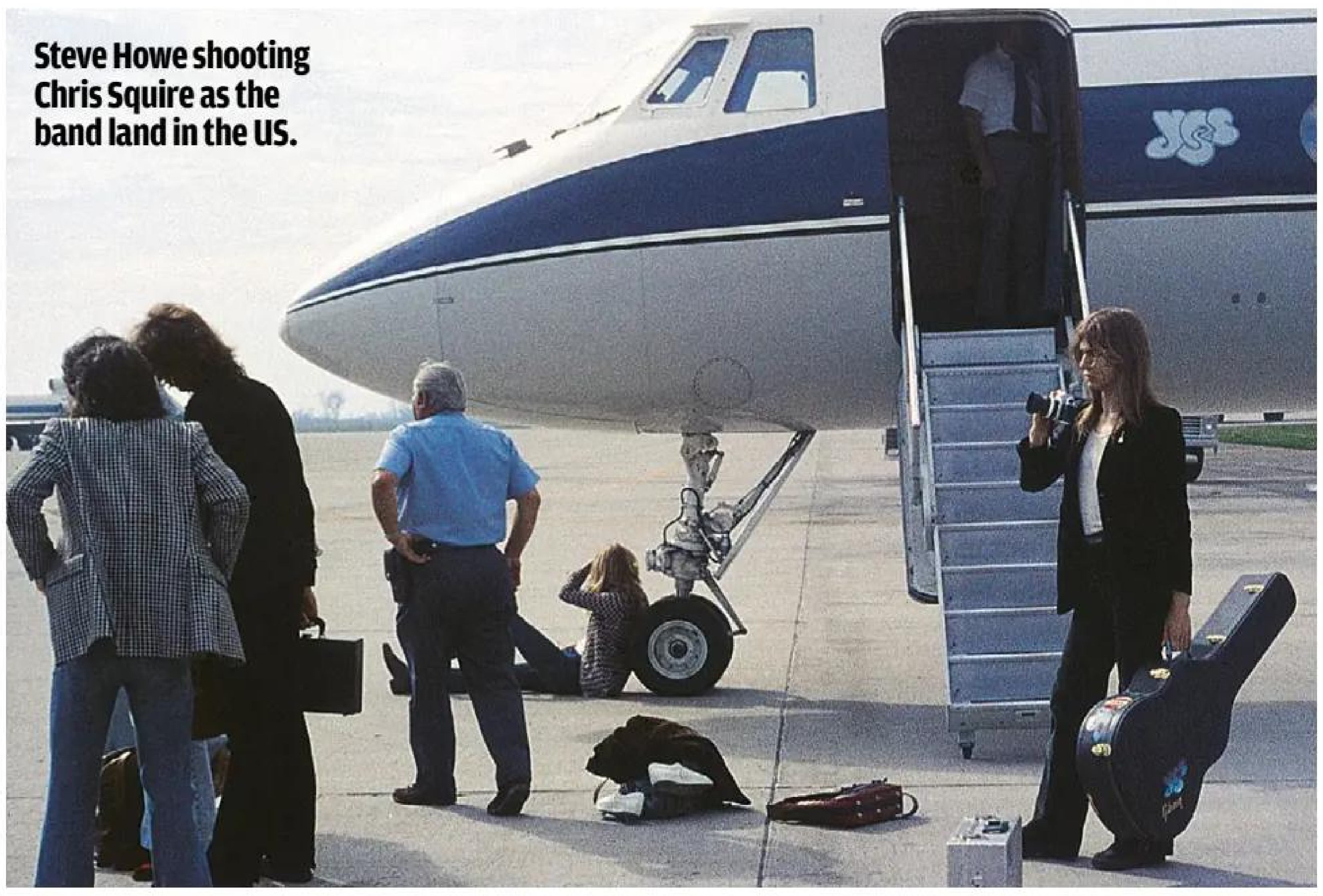

Steve Howe shooting Chris Squire as the band land in the US.

Howe, Anderson and White, waiting for the stage to be rebuilt for a pre-tour rehearsal.

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Tales from the road: one of Roger Dean's shots from the early part of 1974's US tour.

TOO
NEW HUMBLE PIE
THUNDERBOX

The jet set: Rick Wakeman hones his backgammon skills on the tour plane.

> "The whole band was into smoking dope and hash and Rick was into drinking beer. He never touched pot. I don't know what it was, but he was on the outside."
> **Eddy Offord**

band's expansive musical ambitions. And that lack of bucolic charm? Well, Rick Wakeman had the answer.

"One day Rick was in a particularly funny mood, which is not hard for Rick – he used to play jokes on everyone," reveals White. "He said he wanted some cows in the studio. So, he had a cardboard cutout cow at one end of Morgan Studio, so we all said we didn't mind. Then he brought some palm trees in. I was like, 'Okay Rick, have you finished decorating now?' you know? 'It's a nice environment now,' he said, and I went, 'Okay, I can live with that…'"

As an indicator of how strange things had become, White also remembers a shower cubicle complete with tiles being built inside the studio in order to try to replicate the sound Anderson heard when he was singing in the shower at home.

Ask any musician what their ambition was, the chances are the opportunity to make a record would be pretty high on the list. All the players in Yes had been there and done that several times over. As seasoned and successful professionals, there was no naivety about what was involved. They'd experienced the nitty-gritty of putting records together. Yet this time it was different. Every day, as each of them drove from home to the studio, the distance between what Anderson and Howe had outlined and the reality of what was going onto tape gnawed at their confidence. Of course, other sessions hadn't always been plain sailing, but nobody in the band was quite prepared for how choppy the waters had now become.

Chris Squire recalled in 1992 that despite the cardboard cows and DIY plumbing, there was little in the way of levity. Journeying deeper into the making of the album, he and Anderson were bumping heads. "At that time, Jon had this visionary idea that you could just walk into a studio and if the vibes were right, the music would be great at the end of the day… which is one way of looking at things! It isn't reality. It took a lot of Band-Aids and careful surgery in the harmony and embellishment department to make it into something."

Wakeman's musical skills and flair for arrangements had been heavily utilised throughout the making of *Fragile* and *Close To The Edge*. However, changes in the personal and social interactions between the band took their toll in the confines of Morgan. As the construction of the vast musical edifice continued, the personal harmony prevalent on other albums was now rather elusive.

Speaking in 1995, co-producer Eddy Offord commented on the rift that opened up during the recording. "At that point it was obvious that Rick became really much more outside the rest of the band. It wasn't so much musical direction… If you want the honest truth, it was the fact that the whole band was into smoking dope and hash and Rick was into drinking beer. He never touched pot. I don't know what it was, but he was on the outside."

But there was perhaps another, more significant factor. The phenomenal success of Wakeman's solo career with *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII* had created its own momentum and, not unreasonably, there was demand for a follow-up. As *Tales…* slowly progressed during the summer and early autumn, Wakeman, when not supplying keyboards to Black Sabbath, who were working in the adjacent studio, was busy scoring his next solo project, *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*.

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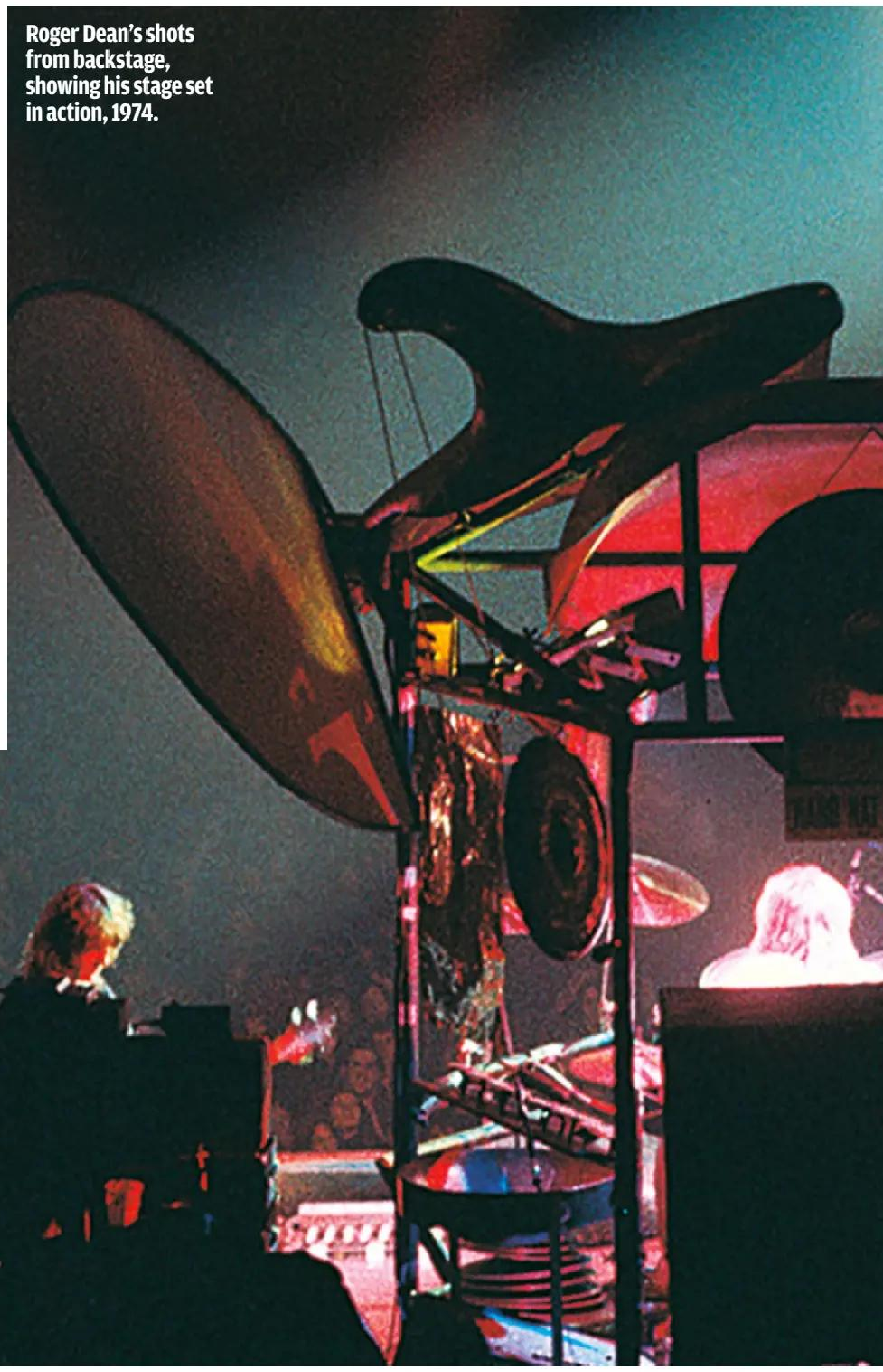


Roger Dean's shots from backstage, showing his stage set in action, 1974.

Anderson, believing that these extracurricular activities were distracting and preventing Wakeman from contributing to the full extent as he had done on previous recordings, was in little doubt as to what the priority should have been. "My feeling was, 'Why don't you put that music into this project, into *Tales…*?' We had a couple of times when Rick said, 'Well, I'm doing what I want to do,' and I was like, 'Okay, well, I'll just get on with it.'"

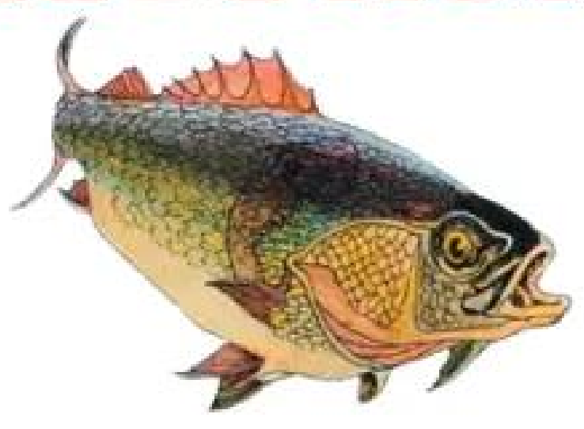
For his part, Wakeman had genuine misgivings about the general direction of the material. "Yes was heading towards avant-garde jazz rock and I had nothing to offer there," he observed in 1974. "We had enough material for one album but we felt we had to do the double."

Marshalling both music and esoteric concepts into a series of cohesive suites required a kind of commitment that was beyond their usual experience, says Howe. That some were struggling was, of course, a cause for concern but, he argues, the way around that was to overcome the doubt by diving in. "You could say to another member, 'Well, you don't like this bit but have you got a part worked out yet? Because if you find a part, you'll get involved in the music!' Jon and I sometimes really had to spur the guys on."

A byproduct of Wakeman's absences was to create a space for others to fill. White recalls sitting at the piano and coming up with the chords that would be used for the *'Hold me my love'* bridge on *Ritual*. On another occasion, the drummer sat tinkering with a guitar, working out some chords. They captured Anderson's attention as he strolled past. "Jon said, 'Show me those chords,' and then he took it over," resulting in the chord sequence being added to *The Remembering*.

"As hard as it was, and it was hard, nobody wanted to bottle out of what we'd committed ourselves to do. We just knew we had a big landscape we could explore."

Steve Howe



A hungry beast, *Tales…* called upon all of their songwriting resources, meaning that many items that had been discarded from their previous writing sessions were now re-examined and press-ganged into service. Some, such as the *Young Christians* theme that appears on side one, dated as far back as *Fragile*. Back then the passage had been given a much rockier treatment but had ultimately failed to find a suitable home. At this point, necessity demanded it be piped aboard the good ship *Topographic*.

The clock was ticking for Yes. A UK tour was already advertised for November and December. Factory time for the pressing of the finished album was already booked in. Every hour that swept by on the studio clock not only broke down into minutes and seconds but pounds and pence as well.

"God bless Eddy Offord," laughs Anderson, referring to the period when the pair were literally camping out at Morgan Studios as they worked around the clock, even sleeping there in order to cross the finishing line as mastering and manufacturing dates loomed.

"In those days it was like rolling the dice, whether you could mix it well on the first take or the 20th take. There's a classic photograph of all of us on a fader. It was crazy but what happened was we would mix in sections: two minutes, one minute, four minutes and so on. Then we'd have the quarter-inch tapes hanging from the wall and Eddy would stick it together with Sellotape, and that was how we made albums in those days. There was no automation or click tracks."

Perhaps not surprisingly, remixing the album in 5.1 surround sound was no easy task for Steven Wilson. Even with so many previous surround sound remixes of classic material under his belt, Wilson recalls how daunting it was to delve into the source tapes and make sense of what were in effect micro-managed moments and decisions taken on the fly 43 years ago.

"Even though it was recorded on 24-track, the complexity of the music and arrangements meant that every inch of tape was crammed with overdubs. One channel on the tape might start off as vocals, but then switch to a percussion overdub, then a lead guitar phrase, then some mellotron, et cetera. In order to have maximum control over the mix, and to be able to give each sound its own space

and treatment, I had to identify and break every element out onto its own channel. This meant that one side of the original album could extrapolate out from 24 channels to 50 or 60 individual parts. Actually, I think side four ended up being more like 100!"

Although they'd always built their albums from a patchwork quilt of takes, *Tales*… had without doubt been the most arduous recording in the band's career. The grand themes and vistas, meticulous sonic sculpting and textural details embedded into the album hadn't come easy, and nor did the completion of the record. With mastering and manufacturing deadlines looming, as Anderson and Offord sat bleary-eyed after the final overnight mixing session, their sleep-deprived state caused a last-minute drama that came perilously close to farce.

"At about nine in the morning, me and Eddy packed up the tapes and went to our car and he put the tapes on the top while he found the keys," says Anderson. "Then we got in and started to drive toward the main road with all the tapes still on top of the car, making them slide off into the middle of the road. There was a big, red double-decker bus coming towards us and I ran out and stopped the bus [laughs]. That was our wild experience of making this album – we nearly had it crunched under a double-decker bus!"

The true extent of Wakeman's antipathy towards Yes' music became obvious early on in the UK tour in November 1973. "I remember we played the whole thing in its entirety at The Rainbow and he wasn't happy," says White. "It kind of went downhill from there."

Wakeman's growing disenchantment would famously manifest itself in eating curry on stage during *Tales*… and though it became something of a running joke, it was in truth an expression of his boredom and a protest of sorts. Looking back, White feels a sense of disappointment at the rift between Wakeman and the rest of the band.

"For some reason Rick couldn't get his head around what we were doing but he played all the parts and he was great. He's just an amazing keyboard player. But he couldn't see where the band was going. He felt he wanted to move in his own direction."

Even some of the band's long-term supporters in the press at the time baulked at a record that had slipped far from rock's usual moorings. With this double album, the argument went, they had overreached. Wakeman's oft-quoted assertion that the album suffered from too much padding because of a lack of real musical substance became received wisdom in discussions of the band's work. In later years it was routinely cited as evidence of prog rock's over-indulgence, with sceptics pointing to its 80 minutes as proof of hubris and artistic extravagance.

When Yes went off the road in January 1974, Wakeman staged and recorded *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth,* the solo album he'd been working on at the same time as *Tales*…. Shortly after its release in May '74, it topped the album charts. Hearing the news on his 25th birthday, Wakeman rang in his resignation from the band on the same day. Anderson recalls the recriminations following Wakeman's departure. "Management and the record company were saying, 'Why didn't you just do another *Fragile*?' I just had the feeling that if we don't try something in this lifetime then, okay, we're just rock stars, and I personally don't think that way… You've got to do things that are a little bit different in this lifetime. And when you have the chance to do it, you have to jump in that water and enjoy it."

For Howe, the album remains an important milestone in the Yes story. "It was a time of spreading our wings, a wonderful project where we went to the end of the earth to do it. There was often a feeling that disaster was almost about to strike, but we got there in the end. You have to account for *Tales*… in our history to properly talk about what Yes achieved because it was quite exceptional. I don't think we'd be the same group without it."

In 2016, as Yes toured America, *The Revealing Science Of God* and *Ritual* resurfaced. "Going on the road playing side one and side four is really nostalgic," says White. "We made a great career of really adventurous material that was trying to move music in a good direction. Side one is a difficult thing to play and side four, you've got the whole *Ritual* thing at the end, which is quite a thing to put together, where you've got the drums playing the lead melody. We had a theme running through the album, recurring though different songs, and it culminated in the whole band playing the melody on drums, all of us at the same time. I'm really looking forward to playing it live again."

Tales From Topographic Oceans is an album you can't be ambivalent about. Asked if it's a formidable achievement or a folly, Steven Wilson says, "Both! One of the things I miss in modern rock music is the will to reach for the stars and risk falling flat on your face. Conventional wisdom might be that with this album Yes roundly achieved the latter, but I'm happy to see a growing number of those like me that appreciate its beauty and ambition. Even when the ideas perhaps aren't entirely coming off, I still admire and enjoy the sheer uncompromising strangeness of it. It doesn't have the immediacy of some of Yes' other records of the era, but I think, given time, it reveals itself as perhaps their greatest musical statement of all. It's pure hardcore Yes!"

THE PROG INTERVIEW

JON ANDERSON

Prog icons don't come much bigger than **Jon Anderson**, the man who, for most, is the definitive voice and esssence of Yes. In 2015, *Prog* caught up with the singer to talk about his upcoming album with Jean-Luc Ponty, reveal what he really thought of his former bandmates carrying on without him, and share his thoughts on everything from Sibelius to strippers and spiritualism.

Tomorrow morning, and probably every morning when he's not on tour, Jon Anderson will have breakfast in bed with his wife, Jane, at their house in the old Spanish mission town of San Luis Obispo, California. "And then we sit for a while and watch the birds, the deer and the rabbits outside the house," he says.

Anderson's sing-song voice is so familiar from those old Yes albums that when you ask where he lives in relation to Los Angeles, you half expect him to answer, *'Close to the edge, down by the river…'* (In fact, it's a three and-a-half-hour drive north of LA.)

It's not a bad life, then, for the 70-year-old, Lancashire-born singer-songwriter and exiled Yes vocalist. However, there have been some not-so-good days. In 2008, Anderson suffered acute respiratory failure, which required months of recuperation and cost him his place in Yes, who continue to tour and record without him.

Today he brushes off a question about his health ("It's good – I'm good"), preferring to look forward to his latest project, a collaboration with ex-Mahavishnu Orchestra violinist Jean-Luc Ponty.

But over the course of the conversation, Anderson ends up looking forwards, backwards, sideways, upside and down. Dig a little deeper, though, and this spiritually minded astral traveller isn't so far removed from the teenager who started his musical career as a singing milkman in Accrington.

First, though, there's *Progeny* – a just-released 14-disc boxed set that contains seven Yes shows from 1972 – to dissect. Or perhaps not…

Have you made it through all of *Progeny* yet?

No [laughing], because I haven't had my copy yet! There's a lifetime's worth of music there. I still remember that time vividly. Yes were on cloud nine and we stayed that way for about a decade.

The original Yes line-up: (l-r) Tony Kaye, Bill Bruford, Jon Anderson (back), Chris Squire (front) and Peter Banks.

GETTY IMAGES

> "Chris is going through it. It's a tough one. I pray for him every day – I'm sending out that love energy."

If pushed, that 1972 line-up was the classic Yes line-up, wasn't it?

That's classic Yes. If I think back to those shows, the band was in harmony, musically and mentally.

Have you spoken to Chris Squire since he was diagnosed with leukaemia?

I emailed him after I heard he got sick. Chris is a musical brother, regardless of anything else that's gone on. I wouldn't be where I was if it wasn't for him. I was with Yes for 35 years – that's half a lifetime. You don't just forget that. But Chris is going through it. It's a tough one. I pray for him every day – I'm sending out that love energy.

What stage is the Anderson Ponty Band album at now?

We've just finished it, and the DVD, and they'll be out in September. We're hoping to tour the UK in October. It'll be me with Jean-Luc and his band. They're formidable musicians and they don't mess around.

How did this collaboration with Jean-Luc come about?

I found a couple of Jean-Luc's songs from the 70s on his website and sent him one of his tracks

DEBORAH ANDERSON/PRESS

with me singing on it. I said, "If we worked together, this is what it would sound like." He liked it and we carried on from there. We went to Aspen [Colorado] for two and a half weeks and did a show, which became the basis for the album.

What material will you be playing?
It's a mix. We do some Yes songs — *Roundabout*, *And You And I* and *Owner Of A Lonely Heart*. The band wanted to play *Owner*… and it sounds very cool with a violin. They play the hell out of it.

Let's go back. Do you remember the first gig you ever played?
It was with my brother Tony's group, The Warriors, and it was in Padiham's Working Men's Club [in Burnley, Lancashire, circa 1963]. We came on after the bingo but just before the stripper. I was a young lad — 17, maybe — and it freaked me out when this woman walked past us naked. It was enough to put you off sex forever…

She wasn't good-looking?
No, she was frightening!

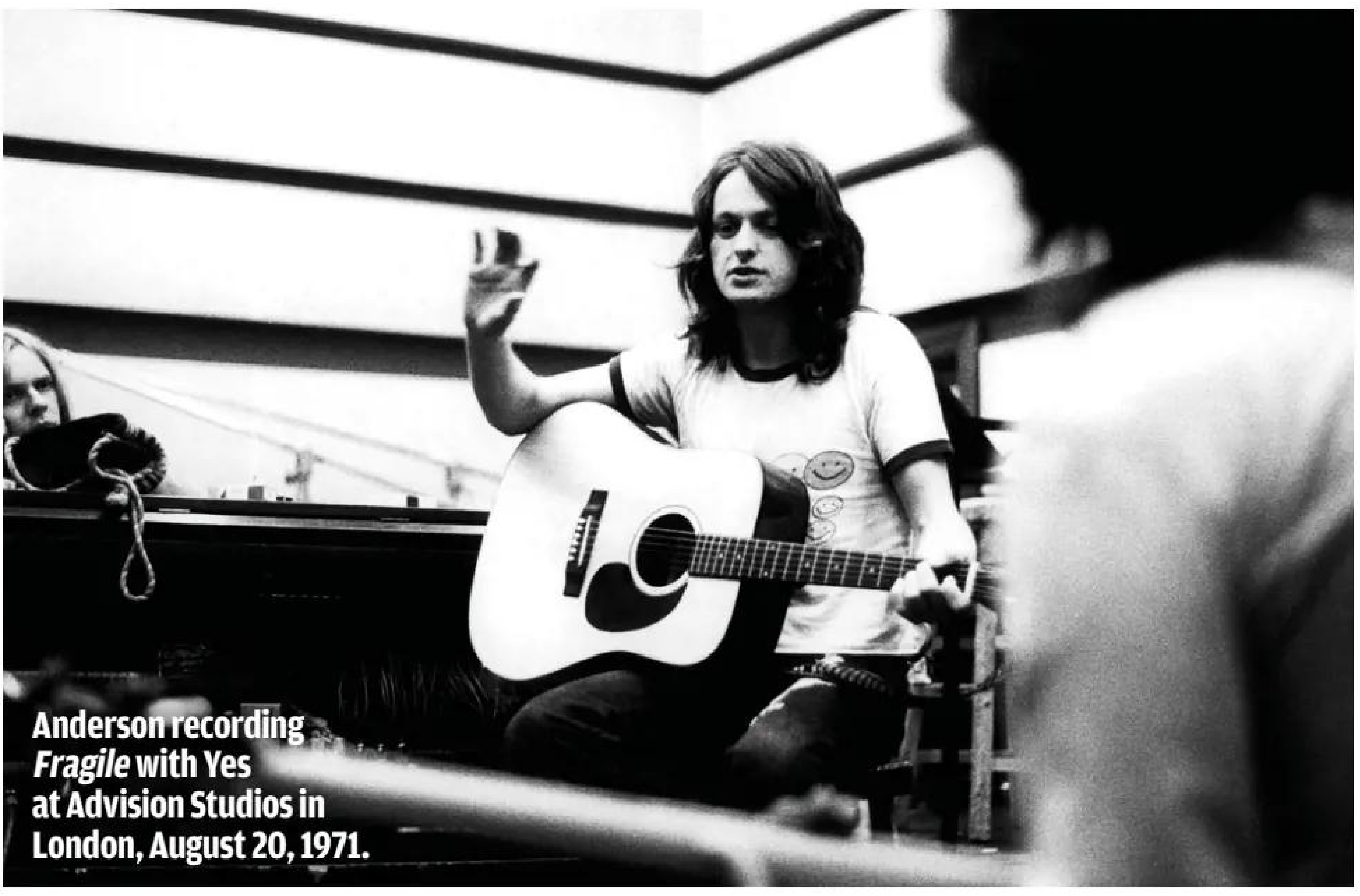
One of your early jobs was as a milkman.
Yes. My brother drove the milk van and I used to hang on the side, and we'd sing Everly Brothers songs together as we did the round. We were always singing. That was a very happy time. It was the beginning of rock'n'roll, Buddy and Elvis and skiffle. That was the beginning of everything.

Do you ever go back to Lancashire?
Only when I tour. I've lived in America for over 25 years and I have dual citizenship. That's the nature of a musician's life — or my life, anyway. It's touring, recording, writing… I'm not on my yacht, having champagne. I never wanted to do that.

That's an unusual attitude to have in this business. The Stones and The Who are touring America now and making millions so they can sit on their yachts…
I know, and it's unbelievable. I remember writing a song about this: *'Money come, money go, money high, money low…'* I think it's on *Tornato*… [*It's an extra track on the 2004 reissue and also appears on the 1991 four-disc set Yesyears — Ed.*] Money is great, don't get

Sharp Dressed Man: Anderson onstage with Yes.

DAVID WARNER ELLIS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



Anderson recording *Fragile* with Yes at Advision Studios in London, August 20, 1971.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

me wrong, but let's not just live because of money.

Your attitude must have caused problems for managers and other band members over the years.
A couple of times, yes! There was a promoter who wanted to put Yes on a bill with another big band. I'm not going to say who the other band was, but we could have made so much money. But I wouldn't do it. Yes needs two and a half hours to get going. You need to have the full Yes experience. The promoter was going crazy: "You gotta do it, Jon." But the more he said that, the more I said, "I don't think so."

This seems to have been a trait in your career: not doing what's expected of you.
That's just me. But that was also Yes. There were not many bands that went off on tangents the way we did. It used to drive our old manager Brian Lane crazy when I'd say, "Hey, we're gonna do four 20-minute pieces on stage tonight." And he'd say, "Why, Jon? You could make millions if you wanted to..." But I'd say [loftily], "No, Brian, it's all about the music."

Let's address a popular legend: the one about you having a wall of tiles built in Morgan Studio because you wanted your voice to sound like it did in the bathroom.
That's true! It was when we were recording *Tales From Topographic Oceans* [in 1973]. I went into the bathroom, started singing and thought, "Wow!" I liked the way my voice sounded, and I worked out that it was because of the tiles. To begin with, I wanted to record ...*Topographic*... in this beautiful bluebell wood in Berkshire. I wanted us to record in a tent and run the power from a generator, but I wanted the generator to be buried so you couldn't hear it...

Presumably the rest of the band stopped you?
They just said [forcefully], "Jon! Stop that!" So I put up a lot of plants and cut-outs of cows, sheep and ducks in the studio instead. The general consensus was, "It's just Jon being Jon." Rick Wakeman said the greatest thing ever about me. He said, "Jon Anderson is the only guy I know trying to save this planet while living on another one." I love that.

> "Rick Wakeman said the greatest thing ever about me. He said, 'Jon Anderson is the only guy I know trying to save this planet while living on another one.'"

You and Rick always seemed like unlikely allies in Yes. You, the spiritually minded vegetarian; Rick, the beer-drinking carnivore...
I know. But our common ground is music. Rick's a great musician. We still talk all the time.

You rejected the drink-and-drugs culture for a more spiritual lifestyle years ago. When you hear people discussing the benefits of, say, meditation now, do you feel vindicated?
Maybe. I already knew that meditation was good for you. But it was when I met someone [second wife, Jane] and fell in love that it really made me want to be healthier. It helps if you have someone with you that has a similar attitude to life.

Is there any advice you can give a novice? I've tried meditating but I can't switch off my brain.
It's a breathing technique. Sit very quiet, have your mantra, and then all of a sudden, there you are. They should teach it in schools. Seriously. I meditate once or twice a day for 15, 20 minutes.

Earlier today I listened to your first solo album, 1976's *Olias Of Sunhillow*, for the first time in over 30 years.
Good. I love it. I still do. I'm surprised, though, that it seems to have acquired its own thing, like a life of its own. There were a couple of guys here who wanted to reproduce the album. They actually did a performance of it [the UML Choral Union in Lowell, Massachusetts, in April 2013] with about 30 people. I've always thought that one day I should get that album orchestrated with a choir. That would be really crazy good.

You invented your own language on the track *Ocean Song*: *'Do ga riytan, sha too Raytan, gan matta sha pa...'* No one could accuse you of chasing a hit single there.
Yes, but it was honest. I was making the music I wanted to make, and I'm still doing that.

You said that Yes were on "cloud nine" for most of the 70s. But after 1978's *Tormato*, you'd had enough. Was it scary or liberating to quit the band and go solo?
It was a combination of scary and a relief. At that time, Yes was very divided. The record company wanted us to make more commercial music and become big pop stars. The more they said that, the more I said no. Rick felt the same. So we quit...

Jon Anderson and Rush bassist/Yes uber-fan Geddy Lee at the 2017 Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame.

MIKE COPPOLA/GETTY IMAGES

Only I came back later [in 1983] with *Owner Of A Lonely Heart*.

Which was a good pop song.
Yes, but if you go into this business with the attitude of "OK, now I'm gonna have a hit record" – well, good luck, but you may as well go to Vegas and throw it all on 26.

The irony is that after leaving Yes the first time, you had three hit singles with Vangelis: *I Hear You Now* (1979), *State Of Independence* and *I'll Find My Way Home* (1981).
Yeah, but by not trying to have hits. Working with Vangelis was the exact opposite of Yes. We walked into a studio, he played, I sang and that was it – done. We would probably do four songs in an hour. Everything was a first take.

How close did he come to joining Yes in 1974?
We rehearsed for a week, and it was the funniest thing. Let's just say, it did not work out. But he stayed in London and we stayed in touch. He's a beautiful man. I used to go to his studio to watch him create and it was like watching a magician. I remember he was doing the *Blade Runner* soundtrack. I listened to him doing this film score music for a few hours and then he'd stop and write a symphony. I think he wrote a symphony every other day.

You talk about honesty in music, but that must have cost you over the years.
Yes. I had a deal with Virgin [in 1981] to make an album about the great French artist Marc Chagall. I also had another piece I'd written about the fairy kingdom. I'd read this incredible book called *A True Fairy Tale* by Daphne Charters and wrote some music based on that.

What went wrong?
Virgin signed Phil Collins and his first solo album [*Face Value*] came out. Phil became a megastar and Virgin asked me for their money back [laughs].

Did you give it back to them?
I did, although I'd spent most of it on production costs. I'd been working with the wonderful jazz pianist Jacques Loussier at his studio in the south of France – Brad Pitt lives there now. I'd been there for six weeks making this incredible music. Then Virgin sent these two guys down – two punks – and they listened to it, and they didn't like it one bit!

Will this music ever come out?
It will come out before I disappear into the ether. But the Chagall music was bootlegged and is on the internet. Someone got hold of a tape and put it out.

What's your attitude towards downloading? Weren't Yes albums meant to be heard as albums, not as individual tracks? Does it bother you that people aren't listening like that anymore?
I don't know [long pause]. I've always thought that music should be for everybody. I remember when the whole thing started with downloads and people talking about paying for this and not paying for that. I always thought music should be cheaper.

There aren't a lot of musicians from your era who would agree with that.
Well, I always thought CDs should have been much cheaper. I used to say they should be two dollars each and in the bargain bin at Woolworths, so we could reach more people. [Starts laughing] Brian Lane used to go crazy: [in a schoolmasterly voice] "No, Jon, *never* ever say that! Don't you ever dare say that!"

Presumably the internet has revolutionised the way in which you work as a songwriter.
Completely. Rick and I did an album called *The Living Tree* [in 2010]. At the time I was doing a lot of solo work. Rick used to send me the music. I'd sit in my hotel with a laptop, write some lyrics, sing them and then send them back. Right now I'm diving into different internet projects like crazy.

Which other artists are you currently working with, apart from Jean-Luc Ponty?
A brilliant guitar player from Chicago called Sean McKee. We're writing some film music together. It's a very surreal concept film about the truisms of magic. Sean's a visual artist as well as a music-maker. He's into this futuristic, 3D-without-glasses system. Roine Stolte from The Flower Kings and I have been juggling ideas for a while. Right now I'm making music with people in Italy, Poland, Romania, France, Holland. I have this constant flow of working relationships.

Jon Anderson and Jean-Luc Ponty (centre), with the Anderson Ponty Band.

CATHY MILLER/PRESS

There's a lot of your artwork displayed on your website. Do you still paint?
Yes, I was painting a couple of days ago. We ran a Kickstarter campaign to raise money for this [Anderson Ponty] album. Some of the people who gave money wanted me to write out all the lyrics for *Awaken*, *Starship Trooper* and the whole of [second solo album] *Song Of Seven*. Re-reading the lyrics to *Song Of Seven* blew my mind.

Why was that?
Having to write the lyrics out by hand, I realised there was a beautiful balance of words. I hadn't thought about that album for over 30 years. But the lyrics still looked and sounded right.

Are you very self-critical?
Oh yes. Of course. Sometimes you look back at things you did 20 or 30 years ago and say [in a Lancastrian accent]: "That were a load of crap. What was I thinking? What was I *smoking*?"

In the past, you've said that some of the best Yes albums are *Fragile*, *90125* and *Talk*. But if you could change anything about one of the other Yes albums, what would it be?
Oh, there's always something on every album. Sometimes I hear them and think, "Oh my gosh, we should have mixed that differently." I was always frustrated by *The Gates Of Delirium* [on 1974's *Relayer*]. There's a bit in there where we were trying to create the sound of a war, trying to raise the devil in man [laughs].

Is it true that you and drummer Alan White made those noises by banging various bits of scrap metal together?
Yes, we had all kinds of junk. We mic'd up one of those children's toys – a slinky – and I jumped up and down on Alan's old cymbals. It's meant to represent the unearthly sound of chaos, but the mix never sounded great.

You've been writing songs for over 40 years. Are there any specific songwriters you admire?
When I hear Elton John's songs on the radio or those old Stax records, I can't believe how damn perfect they are. Randy Newman is another one – I marvel at his lyrics. There's also that young guy with the big hair and the small guitar? Ed Sheeran. I don't know if he's English or American, but he's writing a lot of stuff and it's so beautiful.

BOB BERG/GETTY IMAGES

Have guitar, will travel: Anderson in the late 1990s.

Is it strange hearing Yes performing with another singer? They've had two in to replace you since 2008.
[Long pause] No, not really. You think, "OK, well, so that's what they are now." That's not my idea of what Yes is. But what can I do?

> "I don't blame Yes. They've got to make a living. I've been there myself."

They've always replaced you with soundalikes, though.
Well, they have to work with people who can make it sound as much like the real thing as possible [laughs]. Now, since Chris got sick, it's just the two guys [guitarist Steve Howe and Alan White]. But I don't blame them. They've got to make a living. I've been there myself – you get into your own little world and you don't care about other people.

Could you see yourself ever singing in Yes again?
Of course. Me and Rick have both said many times that we would love to get back with the guys… when they wake up. That's our little joke. When I'm out there singing on my own, I still think I'm part of Yes. Those are my songs.

What's an average day for Jon Anderson, then?
Get up, make breakfast in bed and then go to the studio and start creating. I work every day of the week, seven days a week. I'm always doing something… unless there's football on, because I've got to watch Manchester United.

So it's basically music, meditation and Man United then?
Yes, but I've also become a big Barcelona FC fan because of [Lionel] Messi – he's on another level. They're playing this Saturday against Juventus. That's going to be a big moment. [Barcelona won the game, the Champions League final, 3-1.]

You were 70 last year, but celebrating it this year. How?
To celebrate, my wife is taking me to Finland this year for my favourite composer Sibelius' 150th-anniversary week. They'll be playing all of his symphonies. Sibelius' music is deep earth music that has a real connection for me.

Finally, do you have any last words to share?
I've been writing a memoir and if it ever comes out, I'll call it *Music Is Easy, The Business Is Not*. That title sums it up. But I haven't finished writing it. Why? Because I'm not dead yet.

Yes in 1974: (l-r) Steve Howe, Alan White (back), Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Patrick Moraz.

All That Jazz

New year, new line-up, new sound. With Rick Wakeman out and Swiss hotshot Patrick Moraz in, **Yes** were about to enter exhilarating new territories with 1974's delirious *Relayer*.

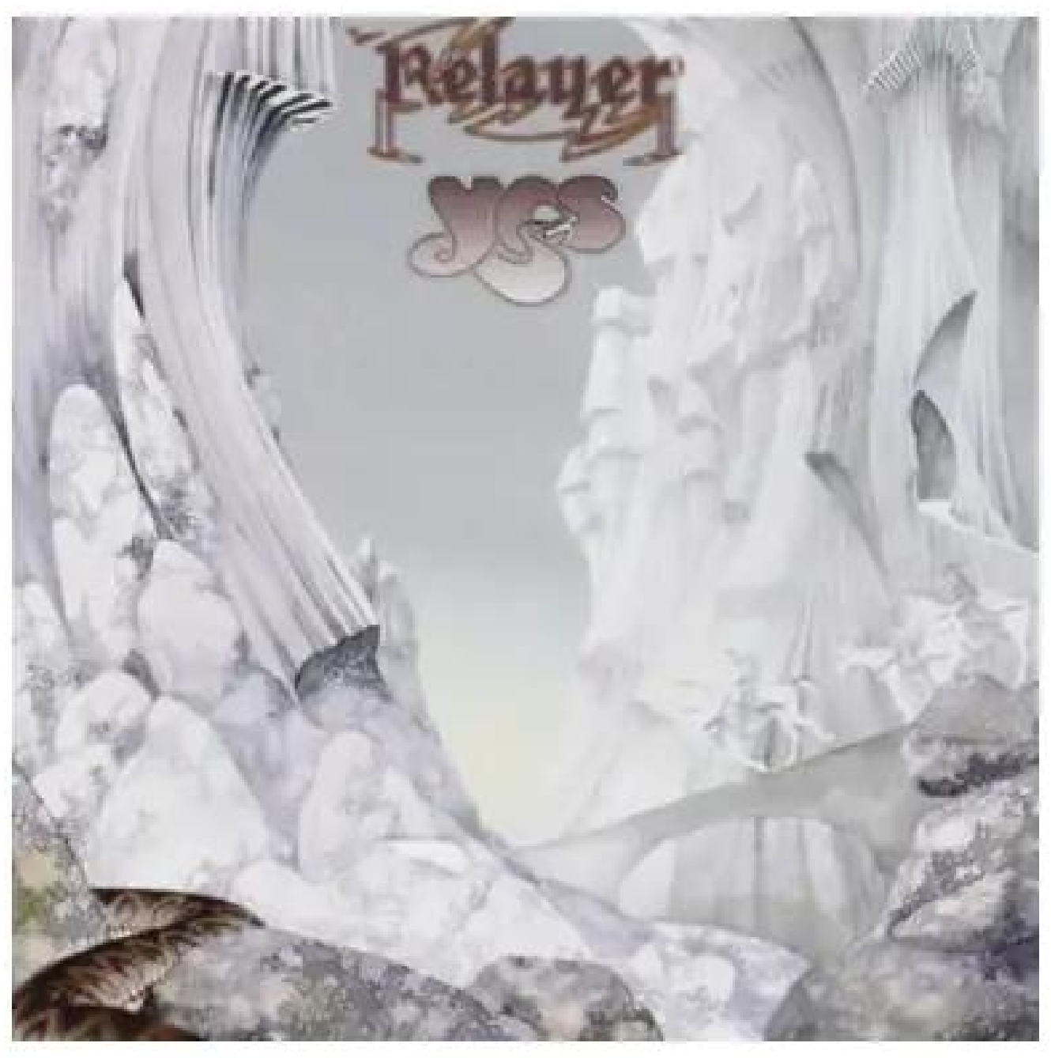
It's 1973 and Jon Anderson is at home listening to a couple of albums he's just been given. Always keen to catch up with was going on in the world of contemporary music, he turns his attention to *Sing Me A Song Of Songmy* by composer Ilhan Mimaroglu. Released in 1971 it's an eclectic soup of electronic sounds, avant-garde orchestral scoring, and trumpeter Freddie Hubbard's jazz quintet interspersed with sung and spoken words addressing subjects that included actress Sharon Tate's murder, the National Guard's shooting of unarmed students at Kent State University and the war in Vietnam.

The other record is Vangelis Papathanassiou's just released soundtrack album,*L'Apocalypse des Animaux*. Recorded in 1970 while the Greek keyboard maestro was still a member of Aphrodite's Child, the exotically textured music hovers serenely, suffused with glistening, pristine beauty but laced with a gnawing melancholy. Occupying a wholly different sonic universe to the previous disc, the reflective nature of the bittersweet melodies captivates Anderson and whets his creative appetite.

As he listens, things are going well for Yes. Advance orders for their next release, *Tales From Topographic Oceans* have already ensured the double album will achieve gold disc status before it even hits the shops. A largely sold-out UK tour is about to start and advance sales for the American leg of the tour have pushed the band into even bigger venues than on their previous visit. With ideas and conceptual themes already beginning to emerge for the next project for the band to tackle in Anderson's mind, the future for Yes looked very bright indeed. All things considered, what could possibly go wrong? Just seven months later he would find out.

“Keith Emerson said, ‘Why do I need to join Yes when I've got ELP?’”
Steve Howe

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES



Not everyone shared his mood. Profoundly bored having toured Europe and America with what he saw as a series of musical ideas spread too thinly across an over-inflated concept, Rick Wakeman had been unhappy for some time. Nor could he work up much enthusiasm for what he regarded as the jazz-rock-influenced direction Yes seemed to be heading toward next. On May 18, his 25th birthday and the day he received the news that his second solo album *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* was in the No.1 spot of the UK album charts, Wakeman quit.

“Morale was low and obviously people were disappointed he'd gone because Rick was an important part of the band,” drummer Alan White recalls. “I think we'd started working on some of the *Relayer* material before Rick left, but he had a bad taste in his mouth after playing and touring *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, and I guess he just wanted to carry on with his own music. We all got a grip and obviously started looking for a new person and started working as a four-piece to get the flow going. We spent a long time rehearsing getting the basic ideas for *Relayer* together.”

Recalling the strange, exotic timbre of *L'Apocalypse des Animaux*, Jon Anderson had an idea for a ready-made replacement. He put in the call to bring Vangelis over to the rehearsals underway at Chris Squire's house. The Greek's ability to knit elaborate orchestrations and arrangements combined with his formidable abilities as a soloist should have made him a natural fit for the group. However, as the sessions got underway, it increasingly became clear that things weren't proceeding as anticipated or desired.

“When we said let's play that again, he'd say, ‘well it won't be the same,’” recalls guitarist Steve Howe. “We were kind of improvising but we were learning parts as we went along and I think that's when we realised he was such a spontaneous player that Yes was going to be a problem for him. We were about working out a solid arrangement and relying on him at any given point to play something that we'd recognise. Vangelis felt he didn't really need to. He was always going to play off the cuff which would have been wonderful, but we're not a jazz group.”

After agreeing that there was little point in going on, Vangelis returned to London leaving the quartet to work on the new material. The guitarist remembers telephoning Keith Emerson, whose arrival in the ranks of the band, had he taken up Howe's invitation, might well have changed the course of progressive rock at the time.

“He said ‘Why do I need to join Yes when I've got ELP?’ Musically it would have been amazing to work with Keith Emerson but whether or not the personalities would have blended, I just don't know. We were starting to realise that the personalities in the group is a very important thing and it doesn't matter how much the music seems to be the goal, it won't work unless you all get on.”

What they needed was somebody with a near-encyclopedic knowledge of Yes' detailed arrangements and the technical ability to not only pull it all together but to throw in a few dazzling solos. The person who fitted that bill precisely was Patrick Moraz. The Swiss keyboard player was best known in the UK for his ebullient performances as a member of Refugee, the trio formed by Lee Jackson and Brian Davison after Keith Emerson had quit The Nice to form ELP.

Refugee had bagged a deal with Charisma Records and they had been well-received on tour, but they were existing virtually hand-to-mouth basis. Moraz himself was living in a damp, rat-infested basement in London's Earls Court, and it was common practice to have to walk three miles to the Refugee rehearsal room. He loved the music the trio were making, but when an invite came through to attend an audition with Yes, Moraz seized the opportunity and immediately encountered the very different world the musicians of Yes lived in.

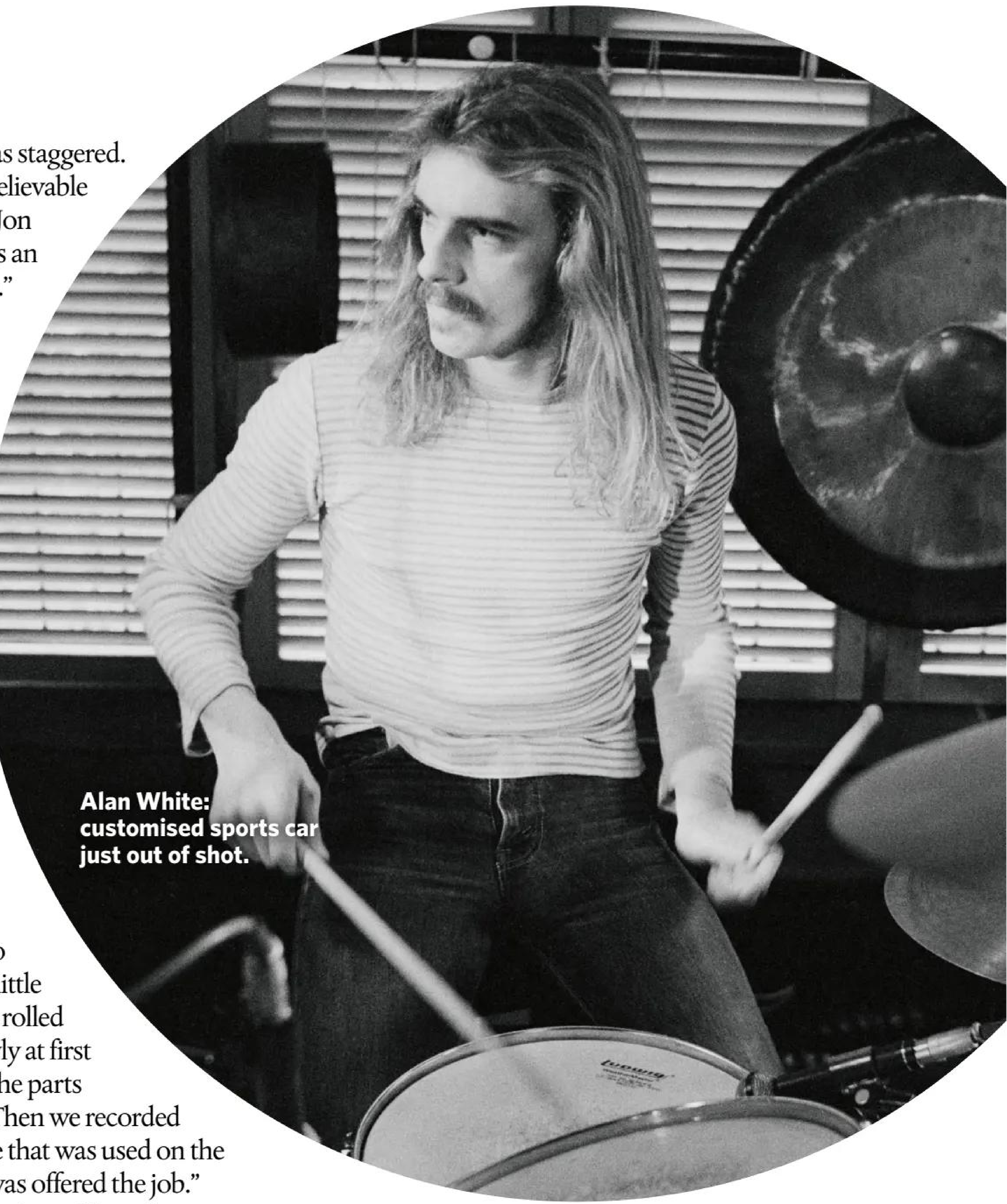
Arriving early, he had an opportunity to watch the arrival of each member one after the other in their expensive cars. "“I was talking with the road crew who were looking after the place and as I looked out across the field I saw Alan White in his sports car - it was a special customised thing," recalls Moraz. "Then Steve arrived in his metallic blue Alvin sports car, driven by his roadie. Then Jon came in an old-fashioned and rare Bentley, and then Chris arrived in what I think was a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud."

As someone used to have to pay by the hour for a rehearsal room, Moraz was struck by the leisurely pace as people sat back chatting, smoking, and drank tea. "I tuned the instruments before we started playing together and that gave me an opportunity to play around those keyboards that Vangelis had used while the guys were getting ready. I was improvising, showing a bit of my speed and ability, and they stopped talking and all gathered around the electric piano and the Moog to watch and listen. I played all sorts of things, including a little bit of *And You And I*. To be honest, I think I got the gig at that point before we'd even played a note together."

The band played him the vocal section of *Sound Chaser*. Moraz was staggered. "They played it at an unbelievable speed," he recalls. "Then Jon asked me what I'd offer as an introduction to the piece."

In an instant the electric piano arpeggio that opens the piece tumbled from his fingertips immediately capturing the band's attention, asking him to explain what he'd just played with a view to integrating it into the piece.

"I explained the rhythm to Alan and Chris so they could work out the answer to the keyboard's call as it were. I even suggested to Jon that he use his flute to which I could play these little fast clusters." As the tape rolled they did a few takes, slowly at first but then accelerating as the parts became more familiar. "Then we recorded the introduction in a take that was used on the finished album before I was offered the job."



Alan White: customised sports car just out of shot.

Alan White was buzzing with excitement at the new additions to the track. "The first time Patrick played with us he had this jazzy prog kind of intro that became the opening of *Sound Chaser*. It didn't really have a fixed time to it but rather it was something that was felt between the keyboards and drums. I come in with the drum pattern that's in 5s and 7s. I got to know the lick real well and played it note for note on the drums around the kit."

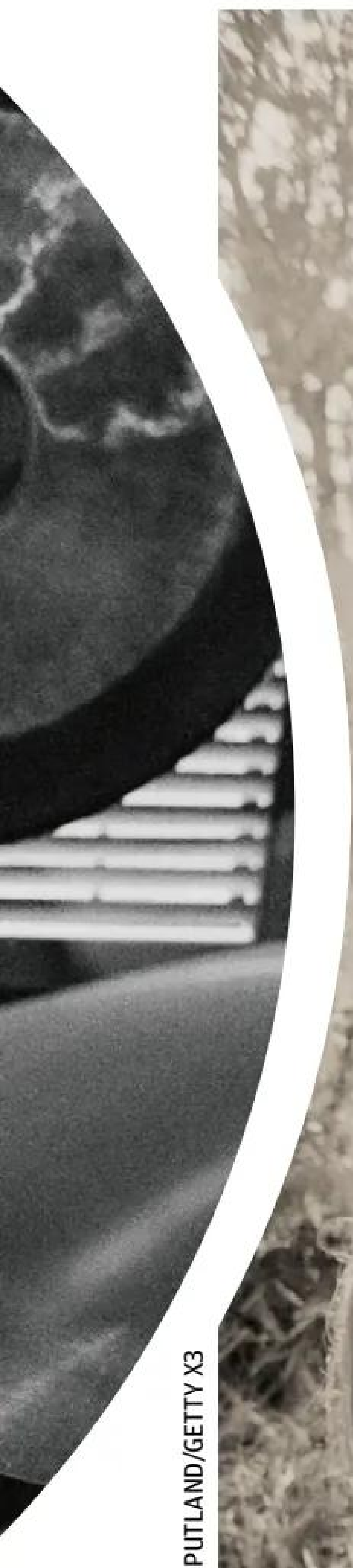
For his part, Steve Howe remembers a feeling that the band was once again whole with the recent uncertainty and frustration they'd experienced now behind them. "Once we had Patrick in there we were up and running. . .his flamboyance brought something like fresh blood to the thing like I had when I joined and like when Rick joined. Patrick was more than capable of holding the fort."

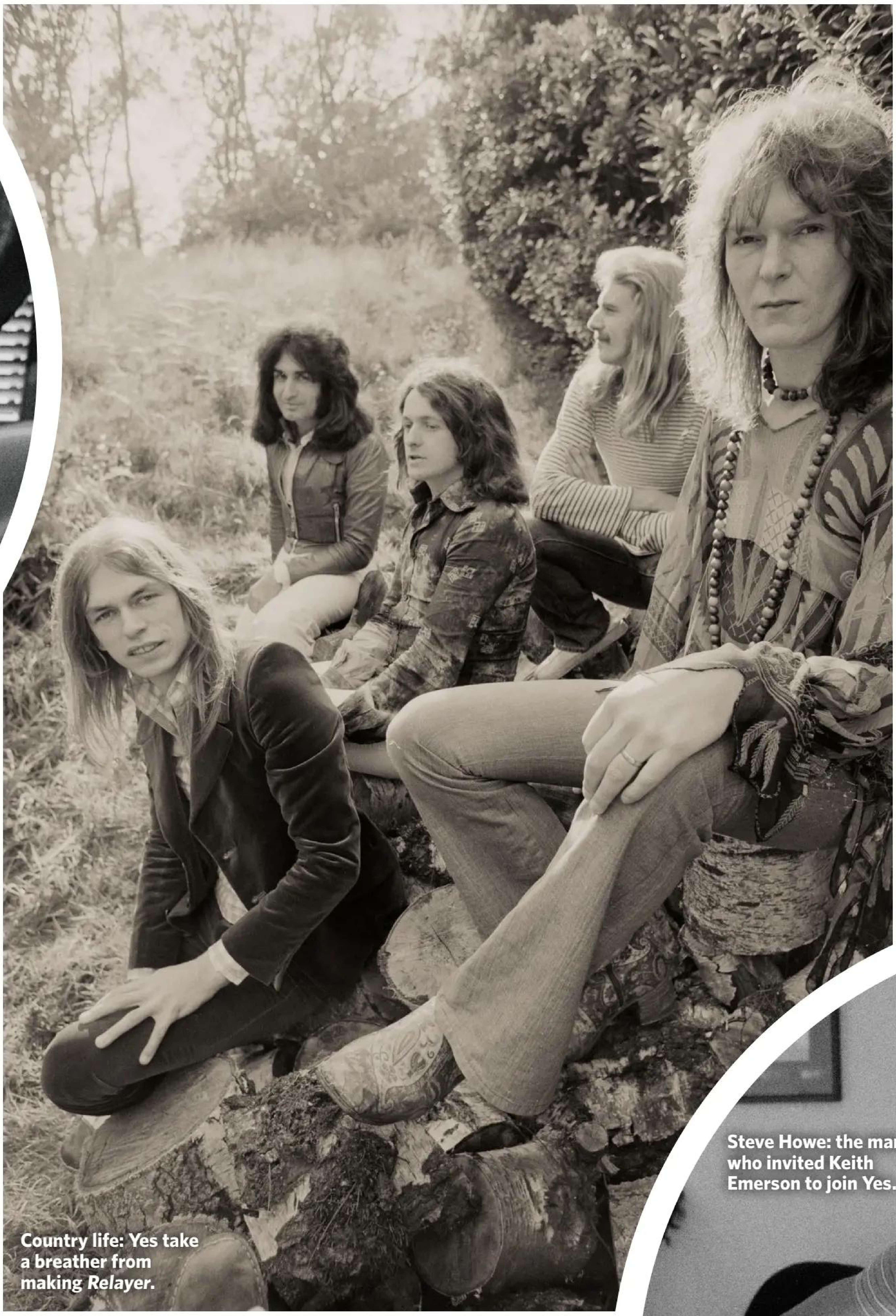
Jon Anderson: "Vietnam was lingering in my mind."

Anderson's musical concepts for *The Gates Of Delirium* took all of his considerable powers of persuasion to convince the rest of the band that the piece was viable. "My main focus at that time was to have a complete idea before I showed it to the band," says Anderson. "I played most of it on piano and it must have sounded very strange and not too musical to the guys, as I didn't play that well at that time. But I seemed to know each section, and why it could work as a whole. So I was very happy when they decided to take it on."

There was always an element of cajoling and exhorting the others to follow a musical line of inquiry suggests Anderson. "The ideas would come to me very fast, and structure was something that I was learning about at the time. So I'd always be one step ahead of the guys while they were learning the last part, and I'd be onto the next part, sort of leading the way; this is where we're going, this is how we're going to do it, and give it a shot. Maybe it'll work, it might not, but let's give it shot. Recording the battle scene was a bit chaotic at the time."

> "Once we had Patrick Moraz, we were up and running. His flamboyance brought fresh blood to the thing."
> **Steve Howe**

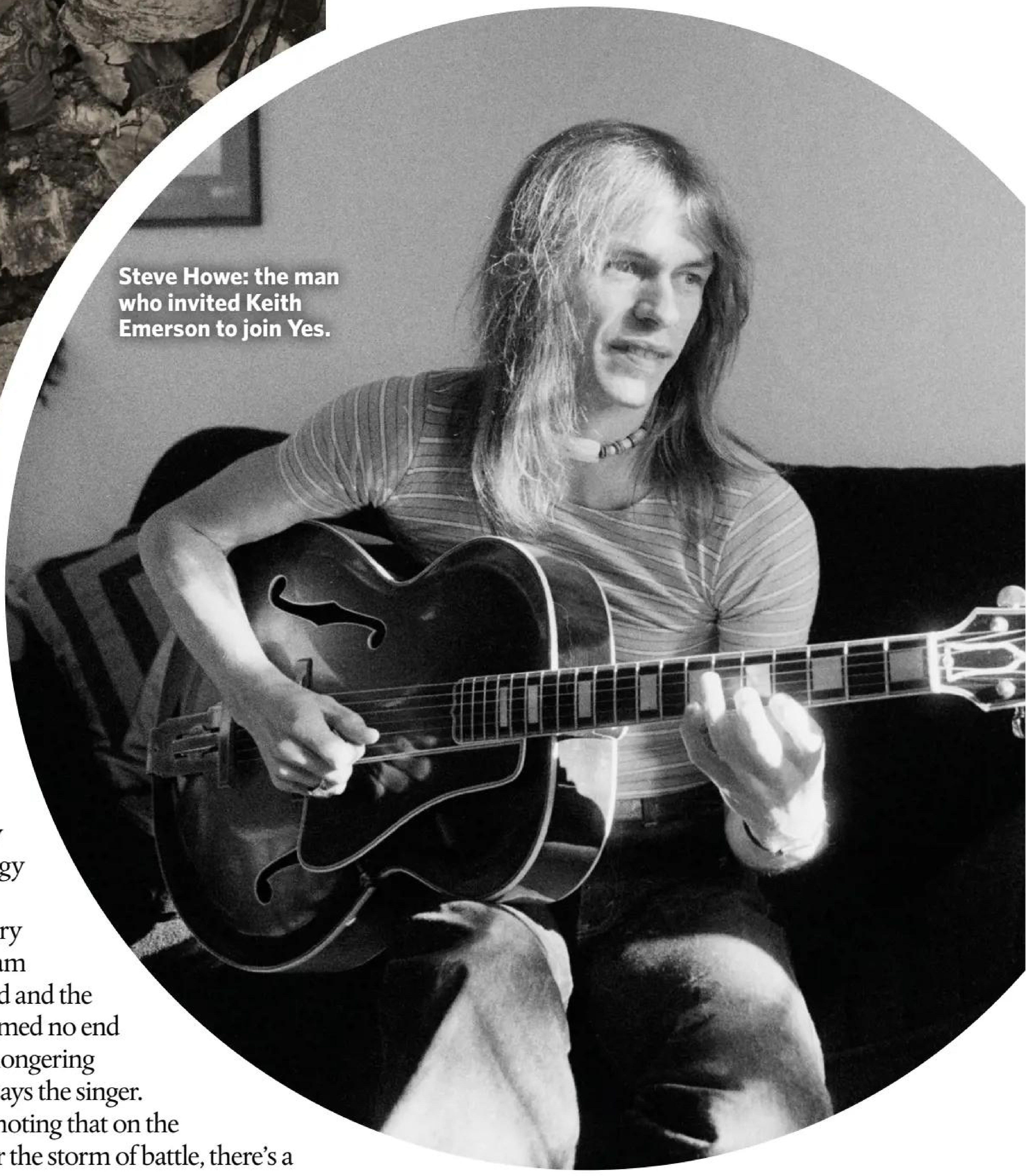




Country life: Yes take a breather from making *Relayer*.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY X3

FAR LEFT: KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY



Steve Howe: the man who invited Keith Emerson to join Yes.

Alan White remembers that chaos with some fondness. "It extended to Jon and myself going to a scrap yard and banging pieces of metal in the morning for about an hour to see what sounded good. We actually built a frame in the studio made out of springs and car parts which of course ended up on the album in the battle section. It was pretty crazy stuff."

Though much is made about the ambiguous nature of Anderson's lyrics, the words to *The Gates Of Delirium* are arguably amongst his most straightforward, albeit presented in his unusual, idiosyncratic syntax. Just as the architecture of Sibelius' third symphony had influenced the structure of *Close To The Edge* and the writings of Indian mystic Paramahansa Yogananda, introduced to him by King Crimson percussionist, Jamie Muir after they'd met at Bill Bruford's wedding reception, had helped Anderson with the conceptual framing of *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, Tolstoy's *War And Peace*, and perhaps elements of Ilhan Mimaroglu's sound collages could be said to have fed into Anderson's ideas for a suite dealing with the psychology of power and ideology left unchecked.

"It was still a very sad time with Vietnam lingering in my mind and the Cold War. There seemed no end to the cycle of warmongering around the world," says the singer.

It's also worth noting that on the finished album, after the storm of battle, there's a moment of calm as the mists and smoke begins to clear, the music has echoes that Anderson first heard on Vangelis' *L'Apocalypse des Animaux*. It's surely no accident that *Création du monde* from the album was played pre-show during the subsequent Relayer tour.

Despite the ambitious and sometimes difficult musical terrain it mapped out, upon its release in the winter of 1974 it was in the top 5 of the album charts on both sides of the Atlantic. Housed in the final Roger Dean cover of the 1970s, it also included some of their most angular music to date.

Yet away from all the rhythmic turbulence and jazz-rock dissonance, the album's closing track, *To Be Over* radiates an emotional yearning that gives voice to Yes's gentler inclinations without compromising the kind of intensity they would fully explore later with *Awaken*. From their debut up to *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, the band's collective capacity to assimilate and harness differing ideas and influences appears measured and incremental, each one building upon the successes and lessons learned from its predecessors yet in this context *Relayer* feels the most radical of them all and in the ensuing 47 yearsits reputation and the esteem in which it is held has continued to grow.

Alan White rates the album as one of his favourites. "We were all totally into it. We were in the studio and coming up with new ideas on a daily basis. An album doesn't sound good unless you're having fun and that's what you hear when you put that record on: Yes having fun." Ⓟ

"So Sweet... So Beautiful..."

Between 1975 and 1976, at the height of their global fame, the five members of Yes all took time out from the band to focus on their respective solo endeavours. For **Chris Squire**, this meant making the remarkable *Fish Out Of Water* album. We speak to the people who were on hand to reel it onto land.

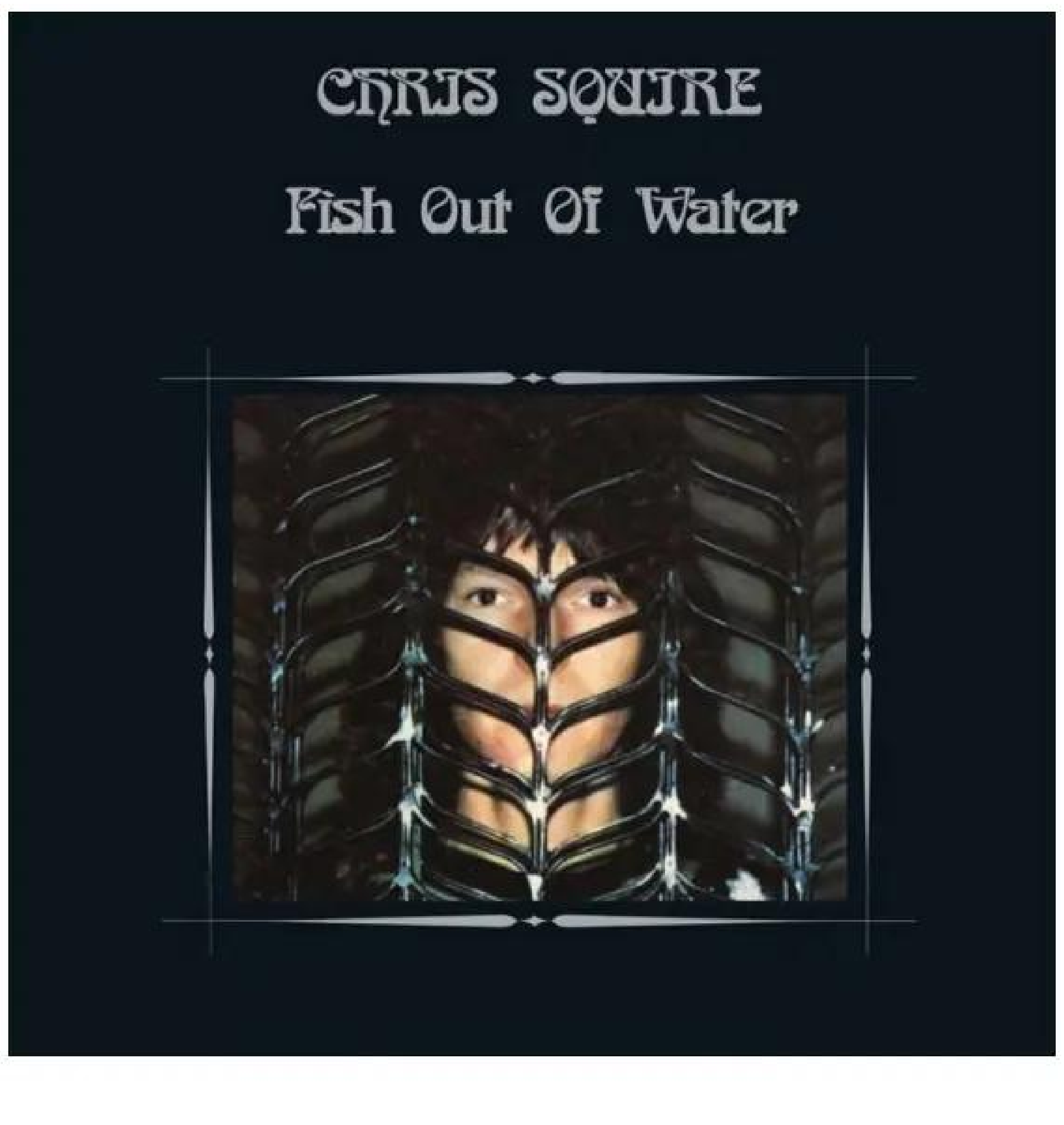
Words: Sid Smith **Portrait:** Koh Hasebe/Shinko Music/Getty Images

Chris Squire is checking the time and he's smiling. It's long gone midnight, deep within St Paul's Cathedral, where he's watching recording engineer Gregg Jackman and a couple of assistants placing microphones and checking levels.

Advising them as to the best spots within the vast, resonant building is Barry Rose, the newly appointed sub-organist who is about to play the third largest pipe organ in Europe. Joining Rose at the keyboard, Andrew Pryce Jackman, Gregg's brother, goes over the details of the score he's written as Rose adjusts his headphones.

Looking upon this nocturnal activity, Squire recalls when he and the Jackman brothers were choristers at St Andrew's Church in Kingsbury. They had been under the direction of Barry Rose, then their energetic choirmaster, and had even performed in this very building. Now, in the early hours of a summer morning in 1975, here they all are once again, old friends reunited in the making of Chris' first solo album. This feels special.

Fishing For Bass: Chris Squire's *Fish Out Of Water.*



Nervous smiles, a burst of laughter and a last-minute cough. A final tweak on the four-track recorder. Glancing back and forth, nods of the head exchanged. Now, everything goes quiet. There's a count in and the backing track of *Hold Out Your Hand* fills the headphones and Barry Rose begins to play the notes before him. Squire suppresses a deep chuckle of delight as the jubilant ascending chords fill the air of this cavernous, sacred space.

It's a spine-tingling moment. In his head, he sings, the lyrics especially apt: *'You can feel it coming/With the morning light/And you know the feeling's/Gonna make you feel all right.'* As the rhapsodic arpeggios and lines ripple and reverberate out from the pipes around the building, the boy who grew up in Salmon Street, known to his bandmates and millions of fans around the world as The Fish, is in his element and smiling.

It's sometimes easy to forget the velocity at which Yes travelled in the early 1970s. A dizzying schedule of increasingly larger tours with more prestigious venues followed

STAN
Michael
Restaurant

Tools Of The Trade: Chris Squire with his instruments of mass seduction, 1974.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

each newly released album. Despite being locked into this apparently never-ending treadmill, the creative bar was incrementally raised between 1971's *The Yes Album* through to 1974's *Relayer*. Even allowing for the critical backlash and controversy surrounding 1973's *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, Yes maintained their reputation as the most innovative and ambitious band of their generation.

In this context, the novel idea that all five members of the group would take time out to record separate solo albums, which would then be released over the course of a year, could be viewed as either audacious or the hubris of over-inflated ego. Executives at Atlantic Records were underwhelmed, worrying, perhaps understandably given the volatile nature of the line-up, that Yes were in danger of diluting what was a highly successful formula.

For Chris Squire, the trappings of that success provided him with New Pipers in 1972, a sprawling mansion at Virginia Water in Surrey, and later, like any self-respecting member of rock's aristocracy, the installation of a bespoke recording studio in the basement. It was here, between tours with Yes, that *Fish Out Of Water* slowly took shape.

It might have been assumed that any Squire solo album would be an elaborate showcase for his bass playing, using *The Fish (Schindleria Praematurus)* from *Fragile* as a template. Yet the

Yes Men, L-R: Patrick Moraz, Bill Bruford.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

core of the album was composed at the piano, in the company of his old friend and former bandmate in The Syn, Andrew Pryce Jackman.

If Yes releasing solo albums represented a kind of safety valve through which the band could let off individual steam, for Squire it was also a means to renew and reconnect the creative bonds in a project that brought out the best in each other. The intention was to build something grand and epic in scope, and Andrew Pryce Jackman's skill as an orchestral arranger meant that whatever Squire conceived, his old friend was the man who could make the vision a reality.

Andrew's brother, Gregg, engineered the sessions between his duties at Morgan Studios and remembers being called to work on the album after Eddy Offord became unavailable.

"I think I was 21 years old and really not experienced enough to be doing this record, but the young have a brave heart, so I gave it my best shot. Andrew and Chris always seemed to have faith in me," he says.

The young engineer also recalls that the sessions weren't held at regular hours. "Chris was the only bloke I ever knew who could be late in his own house. I would turn up with Andrew at maybe midday and we'd find things to do until Chris decided to get into the studio. This might be as late as seven in the evening."

Working on the album was Bill Bruford, who'd quit Yes for King Crimson in 1972. Following Robert Fripp's unilateral decision to disband the group in 1974, he'd been enjoying life as a peripatetic drummer.

Bruford was delighted to be hired by his old bandmate. "Chris was really my first bass player, as it were," he says. "So I didn't really know what bass players did or what they might want to do. I didn't think it weird at all that he seemed to be adopting a rather plectrumy, trebly sound on his bass, and that he wanted it to be as predominant as a guitar part. He became very good at counterpoint so the bass parts had a life of their own. They were something you could sing or hum along to in their own right.

"You're supposed to have this empathetic relationship with the bass player but that's a very old fashioned idea that comes along really with words like 'gig', 'pad', 'charts' and 'rhythm section'. I'm not sure I ever thought I was in a rhythm section much, and I don't think Chris did either."

Bruford's part in the recording began at the end of February 1975, extended through 13 sessions in March and then a final four dates in early April. He recalls that the material at that stage was very malleable. "It was just like a Yes record. There weren't any bits of paper. Chris played me a bit of a song and I said, 'Well, I could do this,' the usual kind of thing. We only knew one way of working together. Andrew was effectively the musical director and he would have been noting bits down because he knew he was going to have to orchestrate it all later. So we did

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Chris Squire, 1974: redefining the bass on his solo album.

> "Those were really pioneering days – none of us knew exactly what we were doing."
> **Chris Squire**

have a real musician present, thank God!"

Another visitor to New Pipers was keyboardist Patrick Moraz, who drove in from the rat-plagued basement flat that he still rented in Earl's Court, just as he had done during the making of *Relayer*. Squire had a certain presence, says Moraz.

"He had a kind of 'halo' around him, if I can put it like that. As quiet as he could be compared to Jon or Steve, he was extremely forthright in telling you what he wanted from you. His instructions could be extremely meticulous in terms of the arrangement, the sound, the balance and so on."

Moraz's incendiary Hammond solo on *Silently Falling* was judged by Squire to be "one of the best I've heard", and, like his idea to play Minimoog bass, was ample proof of Moraz's inspired contributions to the process. However, as proud as he is about his work on the record, Moraz has one regret — that the album didn't lead on to a further collaboration. "There was an inspirational empathy between Bill, Chris and myself, you know?"

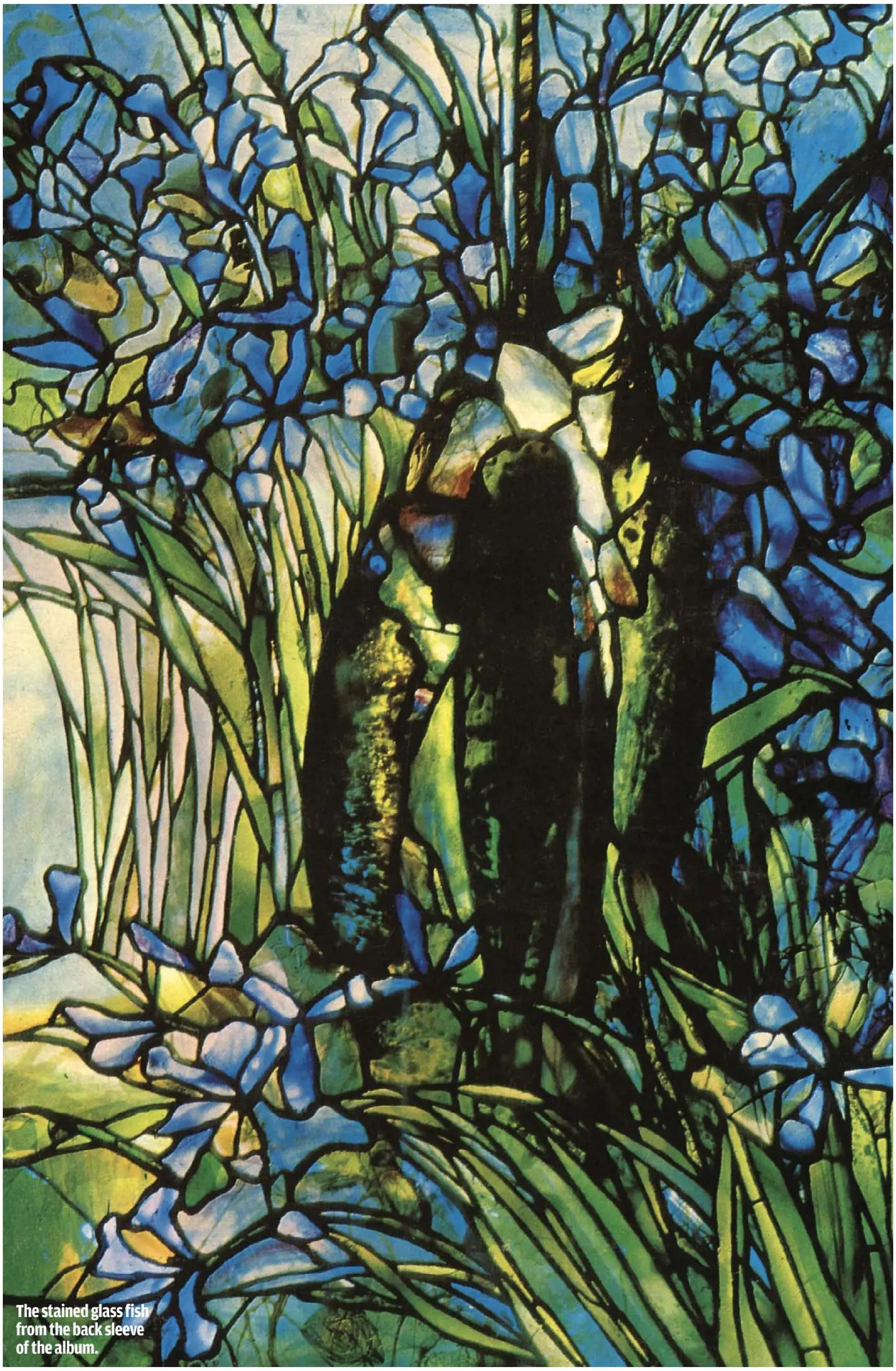
Although Moraz and Bruford would later work together, touring and producing two albums together in the 80s, it's obvious that Moraz sees a follow-up album as 'the project that got away'. "If only we had been able to do a trio album, just the three of us. Man, it could have been absolutely unbelievable. Unbelievable!"

While on tour, the members of Yes would play each other their individual works in progress. This had a galvanising effect, according to Moraz, who also worked on Steve Howe's *Beginnings*. "What Chris did was create a kind of momentum and set the bar for each of us to come up with a solo album that was as good as his."

From the exuberant St Paul's Cathedral organ lines of *Hold Out Your Hand*, the pastoral interludes within *You By My Side*, the driving rock that merges into a Beatlesesque coda on *Silently Falling*, *Lucky Seven*'s jazzy undertow and the surging romanticism of *Safe (Canon Song)*, with its orchestral splendour and spectral phase-shifted comedown, the range and reach of *Fish Out Of Water* is impressive.

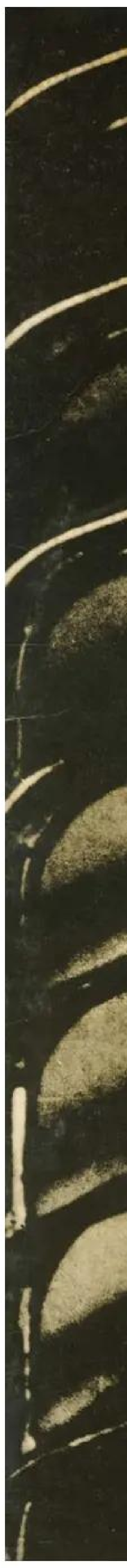
Coming out at a time when extended musicality was an integral part of the progressive rock landscape, it's an album that not only holds its own next to any albums by Yes' contemporaries, but also, whisper it, towers above the other solo releases of his bandmates.

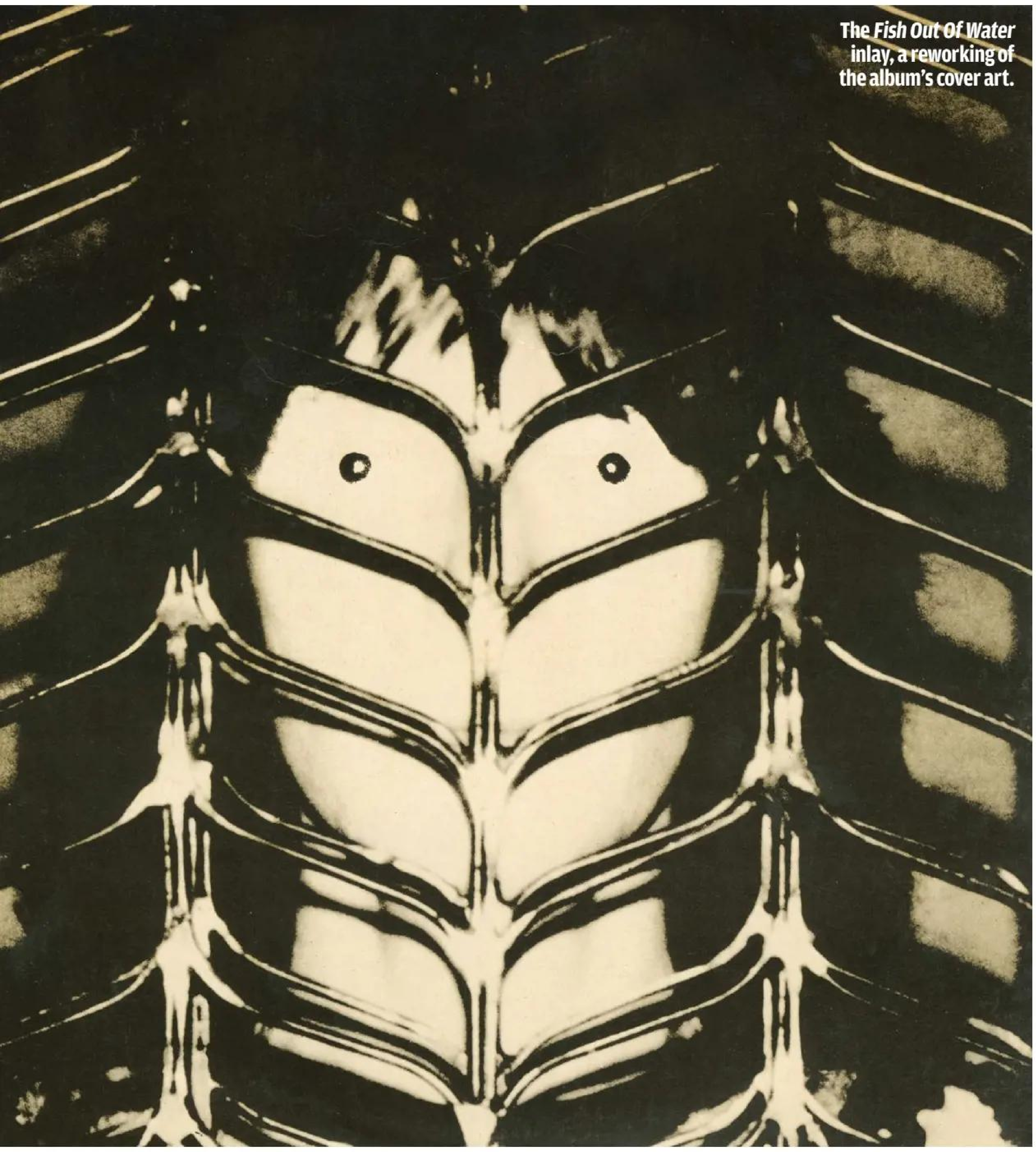
Released a month after Howe's solo album in November 1975, *Fish Out Of*



The stained glass fish from the back sleeve of the album.

> "If you listen to what he plays there are so many voicings, so many different styles and sounds and production ideas going on."
>
> **Nick Beggs**




The *Fish Out Of Water* inlay, a reworking of the album's cover art.

Water found its way into the charts on both sides of the Atlantic. While Squire's virtuosic playing is clearly evident, it's serving the needs of the song rather than placed centre stage.

"Those were really pioneering days – none of us knew exactly what we were doing," Squire remarked in 2007.

Hearing the notes leap from the pages of Pryce Jackman's notation and into the air was a revelation for Squire, as he watched his friend conducting the orchestra at Morgan Studios in one three-hour session.

"Being able to write it down on the manuscript and just know what it sounded like by looking at it was amazing," Squire said of Pryce Jackman's work. "Although later I met people who could do this, Trevor Rabin being one of them, Andrew was the guy I grew up with and I thought, 'God, it's amazing he can actually do this!'"

Perhaps not surprisingly given their close working relationship, Squire offered Pryce Jackman co-writing credits for the record, though this was politely declined.

"Andrew never promoted himself and you'd never see articles in the press about him," says Steve Nardelli, vocalist with The Syn. "Andrew was very modest and so he wouldn't have minded about getting credit. He was really pleased with the outcome. I know the sessions were tortuously slow sometimes but that's because they were striving for perfection. But it was worth it. I think it's one of the greatest albums ever made."

Brimming with a confidence that comes from being at the very top of his game, the blending of pop, classical and rock music into one coherent, thematic statement remains a considerable achievement, and one which Squire was immensely proud of. There was talk of a follow-up, though the endless touring cycle and increasingly internecine politics within Yes meant Squire's priorities lay elsewhere.

The death of Andrew Pryce Jackman in 2003 robbed Squire of a dear friend, and the opportunity to create something with similar aspirations. Perhaps the fact that *Fish Out Of Water* is a one-off, something Squire was never able to return to, is the very thing that gives the album its remarkable presence and power. Ⓟ

YOU BY MY SIDE

Nick Beggs, bassist with Steven Wilson, talks about the impact Chris Squire had upon his playing and reflects on his love for *Fish Out Of Water* and the man he called his friend.

"I was influenced by many players from the 70s but Chris Squire was the number one geezer as far as I was concerned. He was where I saw my sound and where I wanted to go musically. I was aware of *Fish Out Of Water* when it first came out but I didn't get a chance to hear it until sometime around 2005. I took it around on tour with me, listening to it almost like a piece of homework because I felt like it was one of those things that I had to get into. Hearing it initially, like most really good records, I knew it was going to take a bit of listening because it was quite dense. When I delved into it and got into the orchestration, to the production and the playing, I realised that it was such a rich construction.

"Chris is a symphonic bass player. If you listen to what he plays, there are so many voicings, so many different styles and sounds and production ideas going on. Apart from Chris' full palette of bass sounds, Andrew Pryce Jackman's arrangements and orchestrations make it so sweet and so beautiful.

"From a writing point of view, it fits into the progressive genre. There's a lot of extemporisation, long-form ideas in keeping with the progressive idiom. With my 'pop music' head on, an album should be 10 songs, but that was never the way with progressive musicians. They always extemporised everything and that's what this record has. It takes a few really great ideas and really extrapolates them to something else, which again is why I loved Yes so much.

Nick Beggs: following in Squire's footsteps.

"All the tracks from *Fish Out Of Water* have something amazing about them but if I had to pick one moment, I think I'd go for the beginning of *Silently Falling*, with Jimmy Hastings' flute. It's almost like drinking a fine Scotch whisky and then adding a little spring water to it: the bouquet completely opens up. You feel that you've got inside the head of the artist. It's one of my favourite records. Absolutely amazing.

"I was very fortunate to get to know Chris and hung out with him a lot. We'd hook up whenever the opportunity arose. I tried to go and see him when he was in the hospital in Phoenix and called his wife, Scottie, a couple of weeks before he died, offering to bring him some grapes and plump up his pillows for him, which I think made him laugh.

"I had a very good measure of what sort of person he was. He was a man who'd had extraordinary success all his professional life. I think if you have that kind of existence, it magnifies everything about you, good and bad. You don't necessarily have the ability to see how you're behaving. I think anyone who has had even a modicum of success in the music industry can attest to the fact that those things are easy to slip into. That never coloured my feelings about Chris. I always told him how grateful I was for what he'd given to me in terms of a vocabulary and a desire at the age of 15 to become a professional musician." **SS**

HAJO MUELLER/PRESS

Jon Anderson, and the stunning album art for the Moorglade Mover.

"Sometimes I Still Think, 'Where Did All That Come From?'"

In the summer of 1976, **Jon Anderson** released his first solo album, *Olias Of Sunhillow*, which came complete with a complex concept. Forty years later, he talks us through its creation.

Words: Mark Blake **Illustrations:** The Estate of David Fairbrother-Roe

GETTY

Jon Anderson live on stage with Yes in Stoke-on-Trent, May 17, 1975.

DICK BARNATT/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

One morning, around dawn, in spring 1976, Jon Anderson burst into tears. Yes' lead vocalist was in his garage/home studio in Buckinghamshire, recording his first solo album, *Olias Of Sunhillow*. The singer had spent days attempting to synchronise drums, bells, voices and what he calls "a Middle Eastern guitar" to create a vital passage of music. In 2016, this would all be done at the touch of a button. Forty years ago, it was still a painstaking process. Anderson was also playing every instrument on the record.

Late one night, after trying to co-ordinate the tracks yet again, Anderson dozed off at the console. When he awoke, he had no idea if the process had worked. As the dawn chorus began outside and hazy sunlight peeked through the studio window, Anderson pressed 'play'.

A perfectly synchronised one-man mini-symphony floated out of the speakers. Anderson felt a rush of relief and joy, after which the tears flowed. "I was in a state of madness making that album," he says now. "But whenever I listen to it, I thank the gods."

Jon Anderson is revisiting *Olias Of Sunhillow* on its 40th anniversary, which also coincides with the release of *Invention Of Knowledge*, his collaboration with The Flower Kings' bandleader Roine Stolt. The two albums are connected, and not just by having Anderson's name on the cover. *Invention Of Knowledge* is another stage on its co-creator's spiritual journey. The 71-year-old Jon Anderson still marvels at the power of nature and the human mind, just as he did four decades ago on his debut solo LP. But the story of *Olias Of Sunhillow* began long before he ventured into his garage/home studio.

"I'd been thinking about *Olias Of Sunhillow* for a long while before I actually wrote it," says Anderson today, speaking from his current home in San Luis Obispo, California. "When [sleeve artist] Roger Dean started creating artwork for Yes, I saw the ship he'd drawn sailing around the planet for *Fragile* [in 1971], and thought it was a very interesting concept."

Anderson then spent "a period of a year" composing a story about a magician/hero who rescues his people from their dying planet in a galleon-style Noah's Ark-cum-spaceship.

In the meantime, though, his day job meant he was still busy conquering his own planet. Yes' imperial phase began with *Fragile* and continued, unbroken, until 1974's *Relayer*. Each of the five albums they released during this period, including the live *Yessongs*, went Top 10 in Britain and Top 20 in the US, with *Tales From Topographic Oceans* reaching No.1 at home.

THE FINDING OF THE THIRD EYE
Vera Stanley Alder
The Initiation of the World

Vera Stanley Alder's 1930s books were a big influence on Anderson.

These figures make sense of the commercial and musical landscape in which Jon Anderson created his brain-boggling concept album. Yes were a huge hit group, so if Yes wanted time off to each make a solo album — even the drummer — their label, Atlantic Records, indulged them.

Yes' temporary separation began on 24 August 1975, the day after they headlined the Reading Festival above Supertramp and southern rockers The Ozark Mountain Daredevils. "We'd been touring and recording for five years solid," explains Anderson. "It was time for a break. I'd been waiting for a space in which to make my own record, and that space came."

Yes in 1975: ready to embark on their solo adventures.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

> "I was in a state of madness making that album. But whenever I listen to it I thank the gods."

His bandmates had the same idea. After learning about Yes' planned solo albums, *NME* warned its readers to prepare for "Five versions of *If I Ruled The World*". Guitarist Steve Howe's *Beginnings*, an album of knotty guitar solos and rather harsh vocals, arrived in October '75. Bassist Chris Squire's *Fish Out Of Water*, a collection of anthemic art rock featuring a full orchestra and the St Paul's Cathedral organ, followed a month later. Drummer Alan White's understated *Ramshackled* — basically White drumming in a band with his non-Yes mates — turned up in the New Year. Not that Anderson was paying much attention. "I sang on Alan's album," he recalls, vaguely. Anderson and Steve Howe contributed to White's version of poet William Blake's *Spring — Song Of Innocence*. "I liked the other band members' records," he adds. "But I was in such a strange state of mind I wasn't very connected to anybody."

After the Yes tour, Anderson returned to the seven-bedroom country house he shared with his first wife Jenny and their children, in the Chiltern Hills, some 25 miles from London — and stayed there. "Seer Green, Buckinghamshire, was in the country, so I didn't have to bother with the city any more," he says. "I was surrounded by trees, birds and bees, and started living a hermit-like existence."

Anderson went into the garage and began creating. Roger Dean's artwork for *Fragile* was one inspiration; another came from the painter and mystic Vera Stanley Alder's books, *The Finding Of The Third Eye* and *The Initiation Of The World*. Both had been published in the 1930s, but had found a new readership among the spiritually inclined pop generation — even Elvis was a fan.

"Vera Stanley Alder talked about the connection we have with the third eye," Anderson explains, referring to the 'invisible' inner eye through which some believe humans can access a higher state of consciousness. Anderson, a devotee of meditation since the early 70s, regarded the third eye as "a beacon – like a radio satellite connection – to all that is divine".

Meanwhile, in *The Initiation Of The World*, Alder posited the theory that there had once been four "nature tribes" on the planet. "There was Negro, Asian, Oriental and Nordic," says Anderson. "And that's where the four tribes in *Olias Of Sunhillow* came from. But my four tribes were not physical tribes, but music consciousness tribes."

Anderson's tribes – Nagranium, Asatranius, Oractaniom and Nordranious – existed, he said, "through music, rhythms and tempos". Their planet, Sunhillow, was on the verge of collapse after a volcanic disaster. The titular hero builds a ship, the Moorglade Mover, to transport his people to a new planet. He's helped in his endeavours by fellow magicians Ranyart, the ship's navigator, and Qoquac, the four tribes' appointed spokesperson. As Yes' producer Eddy Offord once divulged: "All of Yes – apart from Rick Wakeman – smoked a lot of dope."

But open the window and let out the bong smoke, and what you have is a story about Anderson's long-held belief that music is more than just music. "It's a vibrational energy," he insists. "You have people singing, dancing, crying and loving to music. It's more than just Top 10."

The album's eco-conscious message also seems relevant in the era of global warming. The nature-loving, eco-aware Anderson was ahead of the curve. In 1975, The Green Party was still called The Ecology Party and was widely dismissed in the mainstream press as a haven for cranks and hippies.

Like the story, the music was also personal. Having made seven studio albums with Yes, Anderson wanted to write on his own and play everything on the record. *Olias Of Sunhillow* was the music inside his head, uninterrupted by, say, Chris Squire's earthquaking bass.

> "Steve Howe didn't say much. But I wasn't fishing for compliments."

By this time, though, Anderson had met his future collaborator, former Aphrodite's Child keyboard player Vangelis. After Wakeman left Yes for the first time in 1974, Vangelis joined them for a jam session/audition in Paris. However, the Greek maestro was too much for a band that already contained several large egos. "It was crazy," laughs Anderson. "Vangelis was a one-man band anyway."

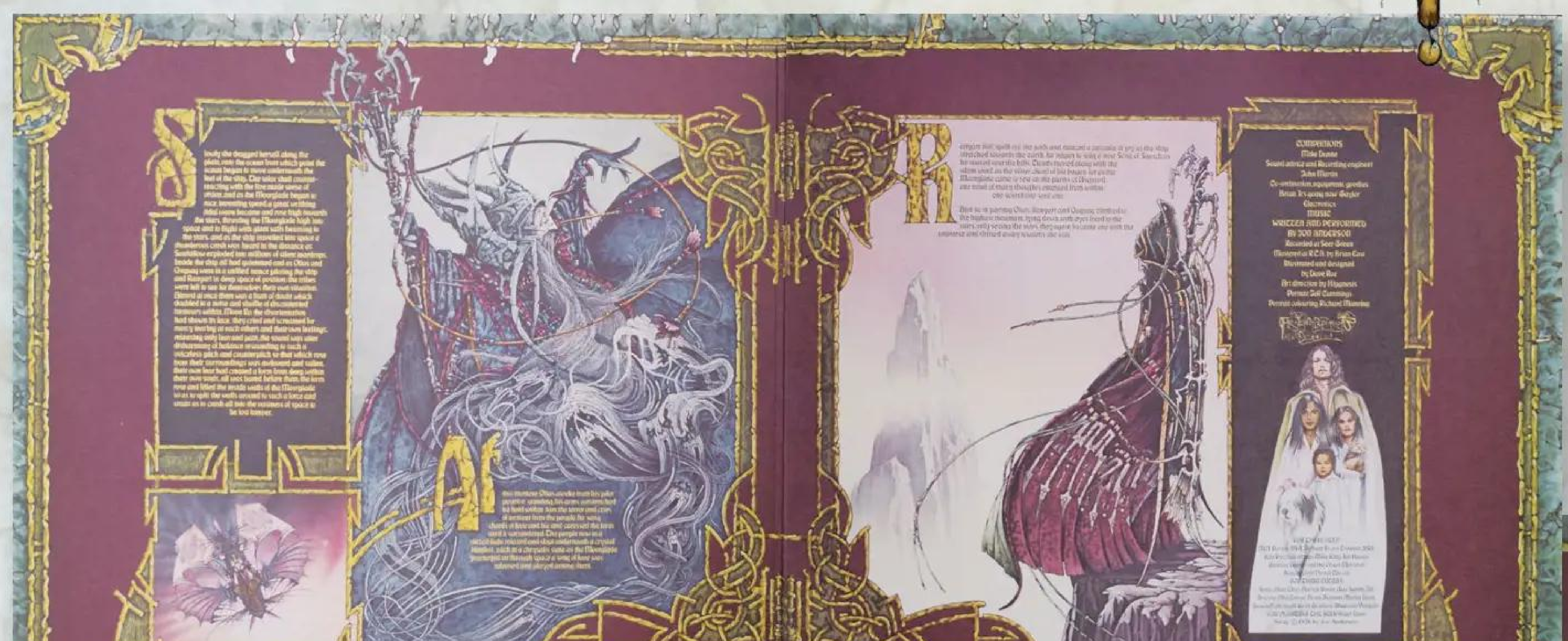
Anderson and Vangelis' friendship led to later speculation that he played, albeit uncredited, on *Olias Of Sunhillow*. Not true.

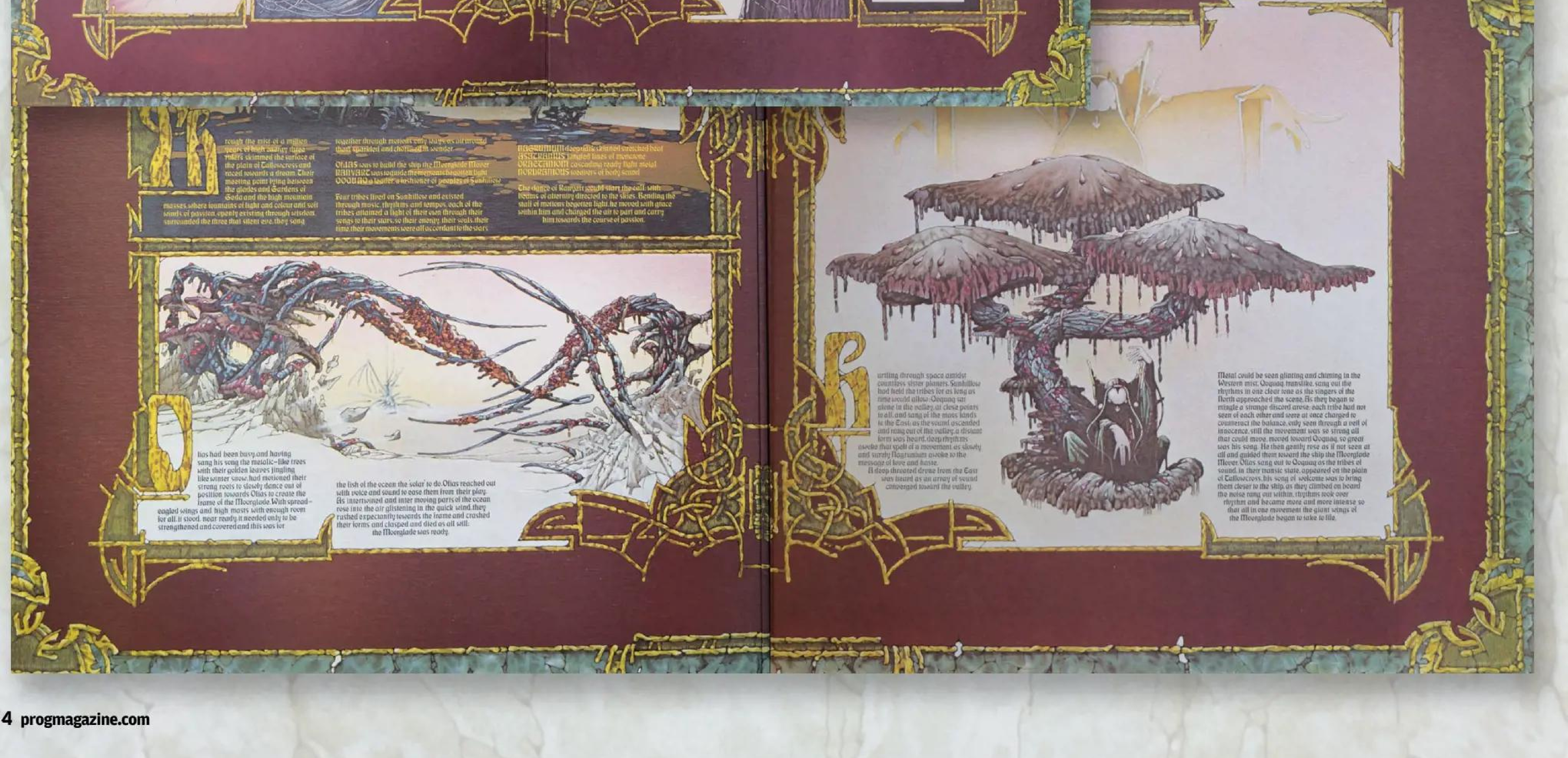
"I had been spending time with Vangelis and I'd learned a lot," points out Anderson. "But I wanted no one else on the album. Vangelis never heard the record until it was finished."

The mythical Vangelis/Olias connection came from Anderson contributing to Vangelis' solo album, *Heaven And Hell* in late '75. Anderson sang on *So Long Ago, So Clear*, from *Heaven And Hell Part One*. But its choral vocals and waterfall keyboard effects do sound like a forerunner to *Olias Of Sunhillow*.

Anderson now describes the time he spent making *Olias Of Sunhillow* as "going to music school". Yes' studio technician and live engineer Mike Dunne worked the desk, while Anderson took care of vocals, percussion, guitar, harp, Moog, sitar, flute and a Turkish lute-style instrument known as a saz.

"What I learned was that you can play instruments and it works, even if





you don't play them incredibly well," Anderson says. "You don't have to be that good, but you can merge a guitar with a harp or a sitar or a flute and create new sounds."

Borrowing from Vangelis' tireless work ethic ("That guy never stopped"), Anderson worked 10 hours a day, with only Dunne allowed to hear the music they were making: "I didn't play it to anyone else, not even my wife."

Anderson also banned Atlantic Records' president Ahmet Ertegun, whom he describes as "a father figure", from hearing a note of his new music: "The record company kept phoning - 'What *are* you doing Jon?' I said, 'I can't tell you.'"

Asked if he ever wished he had the rest of Yes to help him with the album, Anderson responds with a wary chuckle. "No! I didn't want anyone to hear it as they might not like it. I was very cautious."

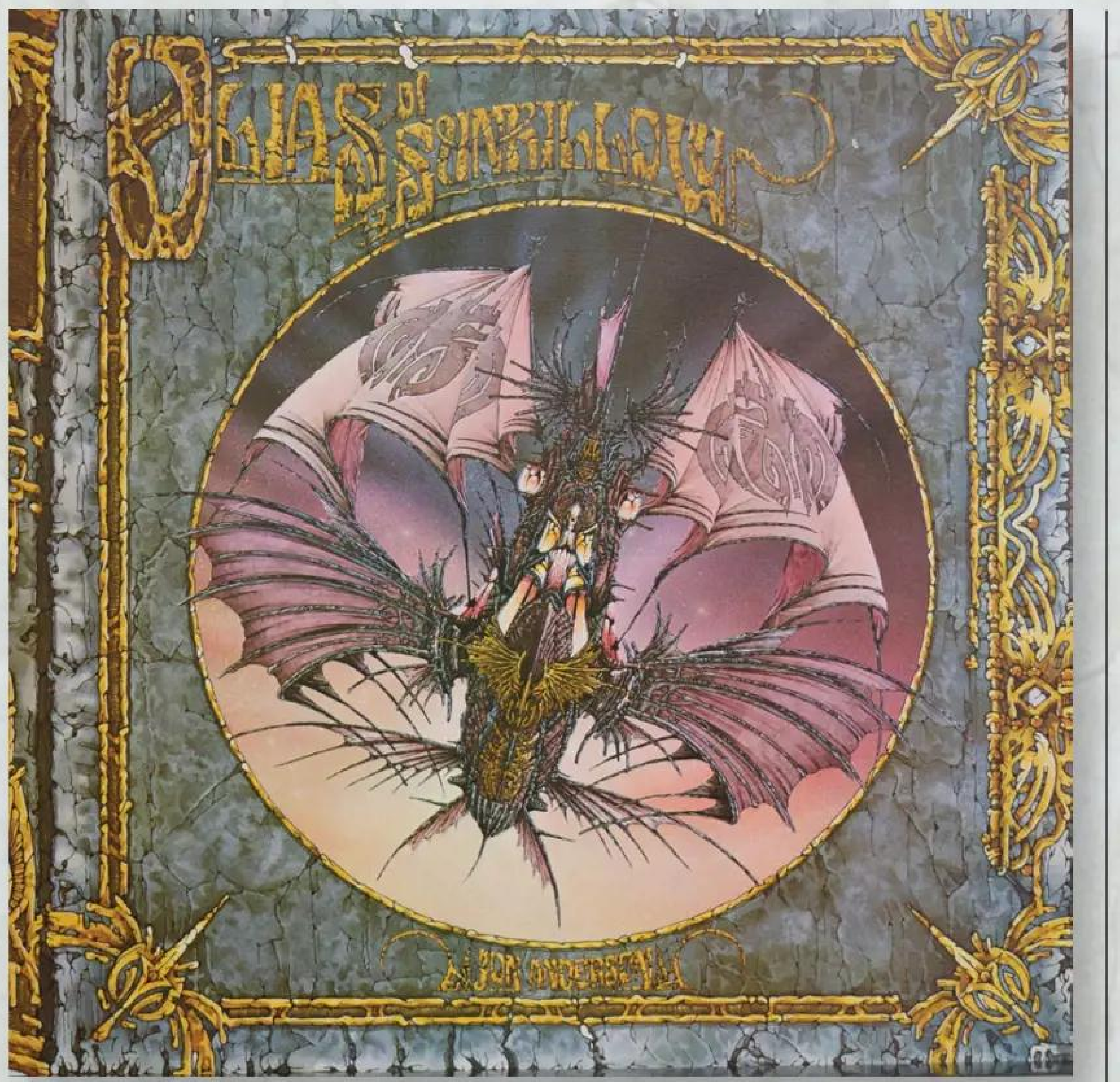
Interviewed in 2000, Eddy Offord suggested that a lot of Yes' creative tension came from former teenage session muso Steve Howe and some of the others questioning Anderson's musical credentials. "Everyone criticised Jon for his lack of musical training," said Offord, "but I think that's one of his beauties."

You sense that Anderson learning how to play the harp and driving himself insane trying to play flutes, sitars and a Turkish lute was a way of proving he *was* a 'proper' musician.

"I wanted to come out feeling like I had achieved something," he admits, "because I was always relying on other people to create the work. Doing it on my own gave me the chance to create something unique."

Anderson's greatest instrument, though, was his voice, something none of his bandmates could match. Above all, *Olias Of Sunhillow* is a vehicle for some extraordinary vocals and lyrics. When confronted by their singer's abstract words, Anderson's bandmates often wondered what astral plane he was living on. But in the garage at Seer Green, he could sing what he liked, unchallenged. So much so that Anderson even created a new language for one track, *Sound Out The Galleon*. The lyrics, *'Do ga riytan, sha too Raytan, gan matta sha pa... mutto matto mutto...'* have always fascinated long-time Anderson watchers – especially the permanently stoned ones.

"Those words were a solo for my voice," he explains. "I couldn't play a solo on an instrument so I used my voice instead."



Opposite page and above: elements of David Fairbrother-Roe's album artwork. Right: the man himself (left) on the album's inside sleeve photo.

> "It's a vibrational energy. You have people singing, dancing, crying and loving to music. It's more than just Top 10."

It wasn't the first time Anderson had done this. *We Have Heaven*, his solo song on *Fragile*, was a repetitive vocal cycle and another forerunner to the ideas explored on *Sound Out The Galleon*.

"The different language was a vocal exercise," he elaborates. "I still do that now. If I don't have a lyric, I make a sound. On *Olias*, I sang it and sang it until we created 20 voices and finished up with this tangible energy."

But after three and a half months in the studio, Anderson had reached his "state of madness".

"There's a point in the story where the four tribes have to board the Moorglade, and they come from different parts of the planet," he recalls. "The music has to reflect that – but it drove me mad."

Anderson had created different musical motifs for each of the tribes. He outlined these differences in his story/sleevenotes on the final album: "Nagranium – deep dark skinned stretch beat"; "Asatranius – jangled lines of monotone," and so on. The result was, he says, "drums, bells from Asia, sitars, Middle Eastern guitars..." Anderson then had to transfer these sounds from four tape recorders into a 24-track machine to create around six minutes of music.

"There were no click tracks [electronic audio cues] then," he says. "But I had a metronome, so I'd created everything in the right tempo." The problem was that after four minutes, "the tapes would go out of whack".

This went on for three days until Mike Dunne could take no more. "Mike was a wonderful engineer, but decided to go home. He'd been sleeping in the garage and I used to wake him up so we could try syncing these tapes again. It was driving him crazy. And I was getting so angry because I didn't know how to stop trying."

Anderson synced up the tapes on his own around 2am, but fell asleep before the recording finished. When he woke up at dawn and pressed 'play', he says: "I held my breath for almost six minutes, but it was perfect. And so I just cried."

Anderson's tears marked a turning point. "Before that, I didn't know if what I was doing was any good. After all the pressure trying to get it right, I wanted to shoot myself. But that convinced me it would work."

The final vital component was the album's equally ambitious artwork. Yes had won the *NME* Readers Poll for 'Best Dressed LP' two years in a row (for *Yessongs* and *Relayer*). Artist David Fairbrother-Roe's work on *Olias Of Sunhillow* took sartorial elegance to a whole new level. But he wasn't Anderson's first choice.

"I wanted Roger Dean," he says. "In fact, I drove Roger crazy, asking when he could do it. But he was too busy."

Instead, a friend suggested David Fairbrother-Roe. Like Roger Dean, Roe (who died in 2013) was an alumnus of the Royal College Of Art. His last commission, for Nazareth's *Hair Of The Dog* LP, had been plastered across record shop windows in the spring of 1975.

Anderson met with Roe. "And David just got it," he says. "He understood the story. When I saw the artwork for the first time, I said, 'Oh my gosh...'"

Even now, it's impossible to separate Anderson's music from the images on that sumptuous gatefold sleeve, with its intricate landscapes and its Moorglade Mover – part dragonfly, part pirate ship, part alien vessel. Though nobody knew it then, *Olias Of Sunhillow* would be one of the last great, fiendishly detailed LP covers. Soon after, everyone, including Yes, would downsize.

By late spring 1976, Anderson had been creating for the best part

No smoke without fire: Anderson talks up *Olias Of Sunhillow*.

GETTY

of eight months. He'd planned to have the album out by Christmas '75. Come the New Year, he was still re-recording most of it onto 24-track – "to ensure the colours and textures were right". Then Yes told him they had to go on tour.

"We were supposed to play in Japan, but I had to say, 'Sorry guys, I'm not finished yet,'" he recalls. "They wanted to make money, so that did not go down well at all. But I was mentally wrecked, totally exhausted."

Anderson finally revealed *Olias Of Sunhillow* to the world on July 24, 1976, by which time Yes had begun their optimistically titled 'Solo Albums' US tour. Within a fortnight, though, their solo tracks were dumped from the setlist. *Ocean Song*, the opening track on *Olias Of Sunhillow*, was played only once as an introduction to the show. Even in 1976, it seemed audiences only wanted 'the hits'.

NME's prediction that Yes' solo albums would be "five versions of *If I Ruled The World…*" was also wide of the mark. Yes ruled the world; the band's individual members less so. *Beginnings* and *Fish Out Of Water* made the UK Top 30; *Ramshackled* and Patrick Moraz's solo concept LP *The Story Of I* didn't.

As the instantly recognisable voice of Yes, Anderson was in a stronger position than the others. *Olias Of Sunhillow* was a UK No.8 hit and made the Billboard Top 50. "An unashamedly romantic solo album that combines grace, taste and power," wrote Yes aficionado Chris Welch in *Melody Maker*.

Welch also saw similarities between its fusion of "folk imagery and [outer] space" and science fiction writer Brian Aldiss' novels *Non-Stop* and *Hothouse*. Like *Olias…* both books dealt with extraterrestrials, ancient civilisations and the elemental power of nature.

Anderson's bandmates weren't quite so effusive in their praise though. "We were all lost in our own little worlds. It was weird. Alan told me he loved it. Chris said he *liked* it…"

What about Steve Howe?

"Steve didn't say much. But I wasn't fishing for compliments."

Instead, it was Vangelis who became *Olias Of Sunhillow*'s great cheerleader. "Vangelis told me it was wonderful, a classic work," says Anderson. "It felt good to hear that from someone I respected, because up until then I didn't know if it was good or not."

> "Vangelis told me it was wonderful, a classic work. It felt good to hear that from someone I respected."

Interviewed in 1976, Anderson told the music press that he hoped people "wouldn't read too many hidden meanings" into the record, and was reluctant to discuss the story in too much detail: "He's sufficiently aware of the cynicism prevalent in rock not to wish to be exposed to instant ridicule," speculated *Melody Maker*.

Anderson is altogether less self-conscious nowadays. "It's a wonderful experience whenever I hear any moment on *Olias Of Sunhillow*," he says. "It still sounds fresh and different."

That said, a planned sequel, *The Songs of Zamran: Son of Olias*, which Anderson last talked about in 2012, is still to be completed.

Much like its artwork, *Olias Of Sunhillow* is a flashback to a bygone era: a science-fantasy-driven concept album released just before such things became terminally unfashionable. It's of its time. But with its trace elements of ambient, new age and world music, it's certainly not the rock folly that it's sometimes portrayed as. There's also an honesty and innocence to the record. It was Jon Anderson doing what Jon Anderson wanted to do, regardless of whether it was a hit or not.

Soon after the release of *Olias Of Sunhillow*, Anderson was back in the studio with Yes recording 1977's *Going For The One* ("a happy album"), after which, he sighs, "The business started getting heavy on me."

Anderson stayed with Yes for two more years. After that he embarked on a solo and collaborative career, scored hits and misses, rejoined – and left – Yes, and sold his country house with its creative nerve centre-garage/studio to crooner Val Doonican.

But Jon Anderson's solo story started here: on Sunhillow, a dying planet populated by four musical tribes, with three magicians and one mystical flying galleon.

Anderson offers a gentle, knowing laugh. "Sometimes I still think, 'Where *did* all that come from?'" he smiles. "But, hey, it worked." ⓟ

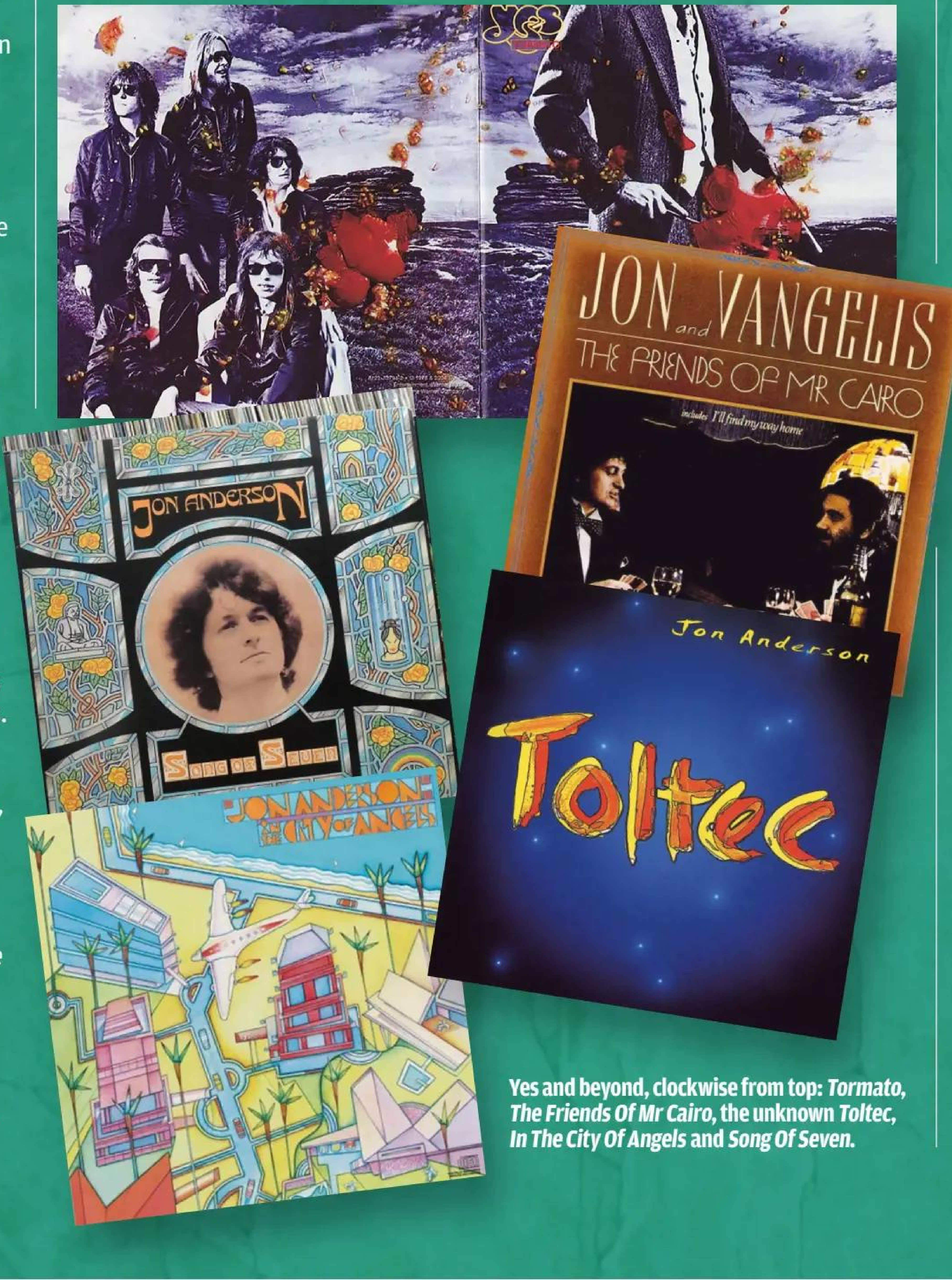
"I blame old whatshisname..."

Jon Anderson ponders the highs and lows of his solo career, reveals why he's big in Quebec, and tells us how Phil Collins stole his thunder – twice.

Vangelis and Anderson.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

> "I'd walk in the studio with Vangelis, start singing and three hours later we'd done three songs. It took Yes three hours to get ready to do one song."



Yes and beyond, clockwise from top: *Tormato, The Friends Of Mr Cairo*, the unknown *Toltec, In The City Of Angels* and *Song Of Seven*.

The back cover of Yes' 1978 album *Tormato* shows the five band members wearing sunglasses and looking in different directions. "That was my idea," says Jon Anderson now. "Because we were all going in different directions."

Anderson left Yes, for the first time, soon after. He'd grown weary of "the crapola", and being asked: "Why don't you write another hit?"

Anderson has never done what his bandmates, his record company or, one suspects, his bank manager might have wanted him to. As a solo or collaborative artist, he's made chart-topping electro-pop records, a commercially ruinous Latin album and a collection of Celtic songs with musicians from his local boozer, The Frog & Peach in San Luis Obispo. But he's always stayed true to himself.

The die was cast when he signed a solo deal with Virgin after leaving Yes. "They signed me and old whatshisname... Phil Collins in the same month," says Anderson, who went to the south of France to work on two musical projects: one about the Russian-French artist Marc Chagall; the other based on writer Daphne Charteris' book, *A True Fairy Tale*.

When Virgin heard both works-in-progress, they asked for their advance back. "And then Phil goes to No.1 [with *Face Value*] for a thousand years," Anderson laughs. "Gosh! I misjudged that situation."

Instead, he re-signed with Atlantic and released his second solo album, *Song Of Seven*. It brought Anderson's quest for spiritual enlightenment into the 80s and was a modest success. Anderson still loves it. "The lyrics dance," he explains.

In the same year, Jon & Vangelis' 1980 debut, *Short Stories*, broke into the UK Top 5, and rebranded the two 70s warhorses (though Anderson was only 36) as nouveau electro-pop stars.

"I loved working with Vangelis because he was so creative," Anderson says. "I'd walk in the studio, start singing and three hours later we'd done three songs. It took Yes three hours to get ready to do one song."

The duo's second album, 1981's *The Friends Of Mr Cairo*, included the hit *I'll Find My Way Home*, plus *State Of Independence*, a Top 20 hit for soul singer Donna Summer. "Someone sent it to her producer, Quincy Jones. I always thought *The Friends Of Mr Cairo* was a great album for radio."

In the nicest possible way, though, Jon Anderson must be an A&R man's worst nightmare. He made 1982's *Animation* with Bowie's producer Tony Visconti, then followed it up with *3 Ships*, an album of Christmas carols. Neither were hits.

After Anderson rejoined Yes and conquered the UK and American charts with 1983's *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* and its parent album *90125*, Columbia signed him as a solo artist. "I was pretty famous then. Your stock goes up after you have a hit. So the record company asked me want I wanted to do."

Columbia presumably wanted *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* times 10; Anderson suggested an album of Cuban big-band music. "So they stopped the cheque," he laughs.

As a compromise, he agreed to work with one of his heroes, Motown songwriter Lamont Dozier, recording in LA with session aces Toto. "I had a great time," he says. "I thought I was going to be a pop star again."

But *In The City Of Angels* (1988), an album of soft soul rock, bombed everywhere – except Quebec. "I played a festival in Quebec years later and it was still being played on the radio. The promoter told me, 'This was a big album here.' I said, 'Really? This is the only place in the world it was, then.'"

Anderson partly blames its failure on "old whatshisname... Phil Collins". "Basically, it was Phil again," he laughs. It was the era of Genesis' *Invisible Touch* and its never-ending supply of singles: "Phil's voice in that period was so perfect for radio. My voice was not so good for radio."

Anderson's solution was to make a third Jon & Vangelis album, 1991's *Page Of Life*, and to sign to the world music indie Windham Hill for *Deseo*, his 1994 collection of South and Latin American music. He was booked to play dates in South America: "But it was like taking coals to Newcastle. We had to change the show after the first gig. The audiences just wanted to hear Yes music."

Anderson's biggest non-Yes hits were with Vangelis, but there are no reunion plans – they haven't spoken in years. "His manager messed him up," sighs Anderson. "The last time we spoke, Vangelis said he was tired of Jon & Vangelis and tired of the business. I said, 'Okay, I still love you, brother...'"

Anderson has released 15 solo studio albums so far. Asked if there's one he wishes had more appreciation, he says: "All of them." But if he *had* to choose one, it would be *Toltec*, a 1996 concept album including new age, spoken word, jazz and a storyline about an immortal Native American tribe. "It's not very well-known," he understates.

For Anderson, music is a source of eternal wonder. "Sometimes a record works, sometimes it doesn't," he offers. "But when it really works, it's so inspiring."

Close To The Edge

From the unexpected high of *Going For The One* to the crashing lows of *Tormato* and the ill-fated Paris sessions, the late 70s was boom and bust for prog's biggest band. This is how Yes' decade ended in disarray and a drunken accident on rollerskates.

Words: **Chris Roberts**

"You never go into a studio thinking I'm going to make a really bad record," said Jon Anderson in 2012, speaking to *Classic Rock* magazine. "You always go in thinking you're going to make the best record you could ever make,"

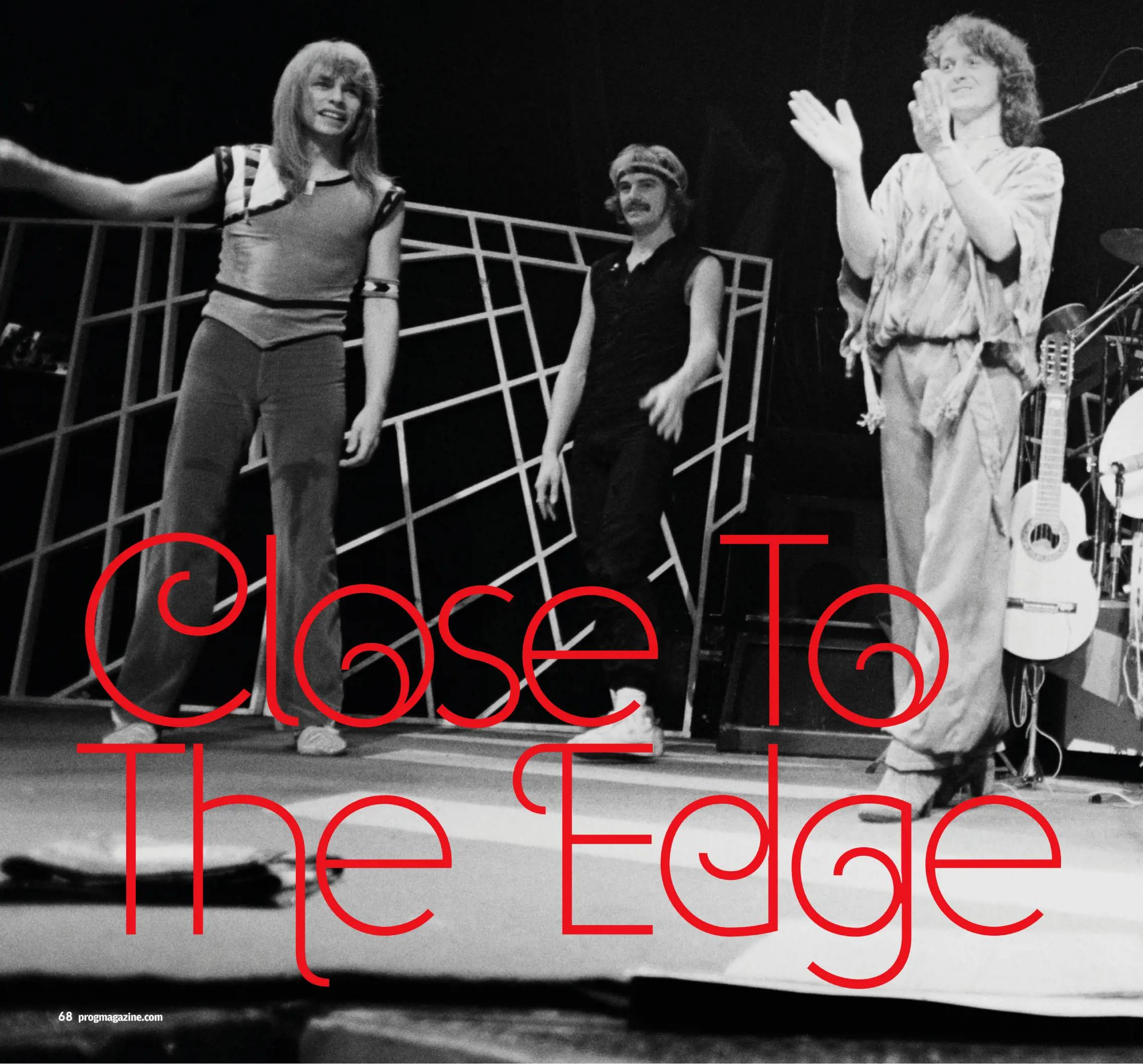
The second half of the 70s, for Yes, delivered what some consider to be their best record and what many consider to be among their worst. Plus, of course, the customary twists and turns concerning personnel, direction and morale. They went for – and arguably landed – "the one", Tomatoes were thrown, metaphorically and literally, before they closed the decade with a split, a reboot and a drummer breaking his foot on roller-skates.

"We always put the music first," said Steve Howe. "We kept pushing on to the next story, the next era. The next album was always the most exciting one to us."

After the hiatus of the mid-70s, when each member released a solo album, the 1976 American tour with Peter Frampton had attracted some of their biggest audiences ever.

"Just as *Frampton Comes Alive* became huge, very fortunately," Chris Squire said. "Of course there was hedonism. That was a big era for everyone getting high! It was quite a lot of fun,"

Nonetheless, despite touring fatigue and unhealthy living, enthusiasm tingled as Yes reconvened in Montreux, at Mountain Studios, to create the band's first collective collaboration since 1974's *Relayer*.



There was one cabinet reshuffle. Patrick Moraz was "let go": Yes claimed he'd been "missing rehearsals" (Moraz spoke of "psychological pressures," saying not everybody "played fair"). With typically labyrinthine Yes logic, his replacement on keyboards was the man he'd replaced — Rick Wakeman. Expressing a fondness for the new material — he'd left when *Tales From Topographic Oceans* became too murky for his tastes — Rick returned, after negotiations, booked as a session player. Was this a sign that the songs would be tighter, less rambling, more productively shaped?

It was. Self-produced and with only the finale, *Awaken* clocking in at 15 minutes plus, *Going For The One* was an energetic, electric and vibrant construction, shooting out moments of genius. Tax exiles labeled dinosaurs by the arrival of Punk weren't supposed to sound this exciting, this refreshed. What was going on?

First of all, they'd rehearsed and written purposefully. ELP were running overtime in the studio, finishing *Works*, so Yes spent extra time on preparation. Four weeks became seven months. Howe got into transcendental meditation while the others played with fast cars around Lake Geneva. Wakeman was motivated again — and not just because his solo tours had cost so much they hadn't profited.

"We began relating to each other again," he said. "I think we'd all become more mature. Maybe I had to grow up more than them."

Yes had also taken a break from regular engineer-producer Eddy Offord (or he had from them, depending on who's telling the tale), and now worked with engineers John Timperley (who'd worked with Bing Crosby and Shirley Bassey) and David Richards (who went on to co-produce the least revered Bowie albums). The crisply modernistic Hipgnosis cover design symbolized the new album's clarity. Sessions spanned from October 1976 to April 1977, and upon release in July it raced to No.1 in the UK for a fortnight, went Top 10 in the US, and ultimately went gold.

This wasn't supposed to happen. Yes were surely lumbering beasts whose

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

> "We began relating to each other again. I think we'd all become more mature. Maybe I had to grow up more than them."
> **Rick Wakeman**

time had gone. Yet, as so often within the band's history, what was likely to occur did not. They even scored a Top Ten single with the sweet charm and wonky spelling of *Wonderous Stories*, and the title track, as a follow-up, engaged new listeners who'd blithely assumed – and probably read in the press – that Yes sounded like sleeping pills. Steve Howe, in particular, had never sounded more awake.

"A lot of that punk period was very interesting to me," Jon Anderson told me. "Because I just kept carrying on with my work, and thinking: 'Yeah, I used to be a punk'! James Cagney was a 'punk'! But, you know, punk suddenly became very good business. That's what it was. We survived it. And we survived Disco too!"

For all the reinvigorated heat and light, it's the more conventional Yes track – that is to say, completely unconventional in its form and function – *Awaken*, which has endured as a favourite of both fans and band members. Some of the players consider it up there with *Close To The Edge* as their greatest dreamscape.

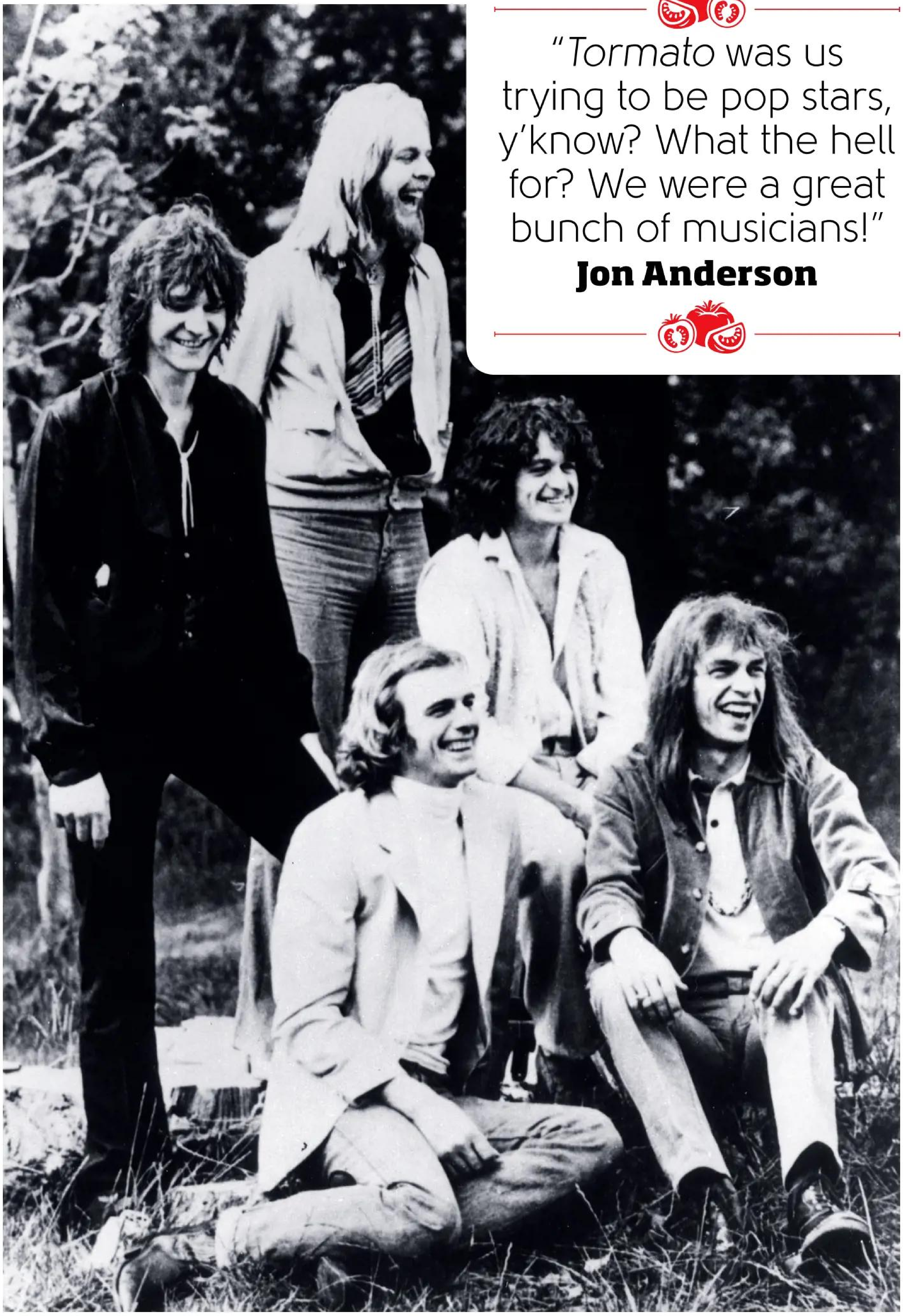
"*Awaken* was the pinnacle of the 70s for me," Anderson said. "It was the greatest energy of music that I've been involved in. I love it to death. After the success of *Wonderous Stories*, though, I was pressed by people to write more like that. Listen, I wrote that about my children one morning when I woke up and saw them sleeping. It happens when it happens. You never know it's going to be a commercial success. So then people, outside influences, wanted more sales, more songs that were three minutes. Over the years that infiltrates the band, and everyone loses it."

Squire offered an overview of this productive period. "We realized we'd been advised to record in Switzerland for tax purposes, and things were all getting a bit foreign to a bunch of guys who were musicians, not financiers. In England, punk took the press's imagination, and bands like us and Genesis were given this 'dinosaur' tag. But over in the States, where we were doing these huge shows, you wouldn't have known anything about it; they weren't so obsessed with that. So everything was still on the up for us."

The unanticipated triumph of *Going For The One* should have galvanized Yes for a bold new era, conceivably even reinventing the group as a novel factor within the New Wave age. Such hope was rather squashed by the failures of its successor, 1978's *Tormato*. A flailing entity which couldn't decide if it wanted to rock or waft or show off technology it didn't fully comprehend, it refused to gel, collapsing within itself. It turned out to be Wakeman's last Yes album for 13 years and Anderson's last for four.

Tormato was more thin gruel than rich soup. Wakeman described the record as a "tragedy," and even the eternally upbeat Anderson confessed that "we threw tomatoes at ourselves before the audience could," For all this, the gentle ballad *Onward* has escaped the gloom, and Squire cited it as one of his best compositions (his *Fish Out Of Water* collaborator Andrew Pryce Jackman brought the orchestral arrangements).

Generally, however, there's no denying *Tormato* tanked. Howe called "tonally difficult" adding that the band had got "differing needs" by that stage.



GETTY/GAB ARCHIVE

Game for a laugh: Yes in upbeat mood in 1978.

> "*Tormato* was us trying to be pop stars, y'know? What the hell for? We were a great bunch of musicians!"
> **Jon Anderson**

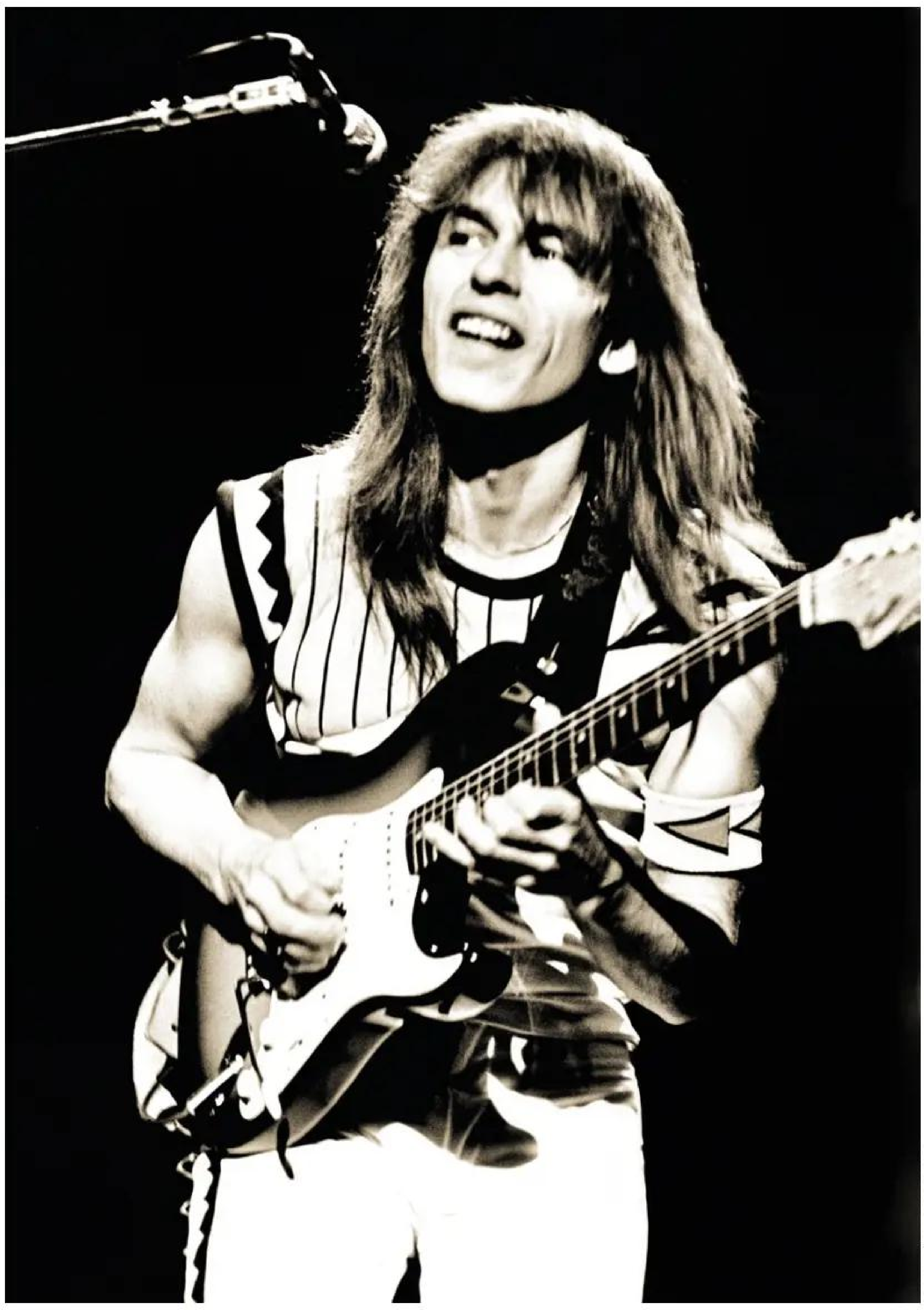
"That was a weird one," Squire said. "It wasn't easy for Rick, I remember. He didn't have his heart in that one,"

"That was us trying to be pop stars, y'know?" Anderson added, warming to his theme. "What the hell for? We were a great bunch of musicians! We'd been moving forward, exhilaratingly, so when the implosion came… ah."

Tormato hadn't cleverly swerved the slings and arrows of punk and its supportive press the way *Going For The One* had. Recorded in London (despite plans to do half in Barbados), it suffered from each member pretty much thinking they alone were the producer, leading of course to ego

Chris Squire and (below) Steve Howe: punk didn't kill Yes – they managed it themselves.

GETTY/BOB RIHA JR


GETTY/GUS STEWART

clashes. Wakeman brought a raft of new instruments; the others infuriated him with practical jokes such as messing with his settings when he was absent. One day he pressed a key to hear a cassette of Seals And Crofts which they'd rigged up. He didn't, apparently, find this hilarious. And even the least trained ear can hear that Howe's and Wakeman's choices of sound are competing with, rather than complementing, each other.

Perversely, *Tormato* sold decently, with *Don't Kill The Whale* a minor hit and the album reaching N.8 in the UK and No.10 in the US. Their '78-'79 American tour was a huge success. Yet for a platinum record, history has not been kind to it, and not just musically. It's been reported that Wakeman was so irritated by the resulting expensive Hipgnosis artwork that he threw a tomato at it. Howe, however, backed up by Alan White, reckons it was somebody at Hipgnosis who chucked the tomato, which he took as an insult. For all the continued commercial joy, the atmosphere around the camp was more rotten tomatoes than sweetness and light. Morale was on thin ice. Cracks were showing. Things were about to change once more.

The choice of Roy Thomas Baker to produce Yes' mooted tenth album seemed, on paper, inspired. Over the past decade, he'd delivered stellar results with Queen (who in a way had inhaled the essence of Yes and made it pop), The Cars and Journey. But when the band and Baker gathered in Paris in October 1979, it quickly became apparent that things weren't going to proceed as planned.

The locaition was part of the problem. "I find Paris excessively inspiring," Baker said in 2016, but Steve Howe disagreed. "It was a whole different reality – reality being the operative word," said the guitarist. "It wasn't beautiful like Montreux. There was no fantasy here."

Wakeman wasn't feeling it either. "The world of music was going through some serious changes and Yes was not embracing them."

It wasn't just Paris or changing fashions that were the problem. The band were having one of their frequent periods of not getting on. Baker subsequently talked of "communication issues" within the group, and a fissure between the compositions of Anderson and Wakeman and the others' attempts to garnish them musically. Howe and Squire grumbled; Wakeman threw peanuts at White's drum kit. "Mayhem," recalled Howe. Not only were they not on the same road, they weren't even heading in the same direction. "There were two camps," concurred Baker. "I felt more like a referee than a producer."

Atlantic Records boss Ahmet Ertegun flew over from New York in a desperate attempt to restore harmony, to no avail. "Not even Henry Kissinger could have resolved this mess," muttered Wakeman.

According to Anderson, Baker's fondess for carousing didn't help matters. "They brought in a producer who was worse than anybody in the band for going out and partying," Anderson sighed in 2012 (his use of "they" was quite telling). "That's why the next album never got made. Too much partying."

By Christmas, the jig was up. Recalled Anderson: "So much wasted money and energy. I just said, 'That's it, I'm going to live in the South of France.' I was so upset."

The final straw came via a moment of pure, if painful comedy. "Alan and his girlfriend decided to stay in Paris one weekend, and he went out with Richard Branson to a roller disco," Chris Squire later said. "And broke his foot. We couldn't carry on without a drummer. After that, things fell apart."

As for White himself, he admitted: "Rollerskating with Branson is not something I should have been doing. It was in a nightclub, and we'd had a bottle of wine and were fighting over the skates because there was only one pair our size. I got them on, went ten yards, and fell over. Hobbled out of there. When I tried to go to bed, I couldn't get my cowboy boot off, and realized it was bad,"

And with such bathos the dreams of a new Parisian Yes album were stomped on. "Jon and I both felt it was slipping away, so it was time for us to slip away too", said Wakeman, who acknowledged he shed a tear

"All water under the bridge now," Howe has conceded. "The session was going nowhere. It didn't have the same bright feeling we had on *Relayer*, or the sense of reunion we had on *Going For The One*. We weren't challenging Yes to go forward. We had a good run and did some great things. That wasn't one of them."

Various cuts from the Paris sessions have since emerged on compilations or reissues. But Yes now had to shake the kaleidoscope. The new decade brought an amended line-up and altered angle of attack, with, inevitably, no shortage of drama. ⓟ

All The World's A Stage

INSET: FIN COSTELLO/GETTY

Exit the 1970s, Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman, enter the 1980s, Buggles and a heap of controversy. In 2012, the musicians involved looked back on *Drama* – a **Yes** album like no other.

Words: Chris Roberts **Images:** Michael Putland/Getty Images

Specs appeal: Trevor Horn and Geoff Downes in Buggles (above) and with the reconfigured Yes in 1980 (left).

As the glossy, gleaming 1980s dawned, Yes, previously oft-perceived as indulgent prog dinosaurs, radically modernised. They embraced a little help from Trevor Horn and Geoff Downes (then also known as Buggles), and enjoyed a new era of success, subsequently rebooting themselves time after time with new, old and returning members. Yet not all Yes fans were enchanted.

"We started out in America, where everybody got into it straight away," Steve Howe recalls of the 1980 tour by the new, Jon Anderson-less line-up. "We walked on stage and they just loved it. We did songs both old and new and nobody blinked. That was both surprising and welcome. But it disarmed us for what was to happen when we came to Britain. Which was: 'We want Jon!' 'Get Jon back!' People were quite verbal and aggressive about it. As if they hadn't seen enough changes with Rick Wakeman coming in and out twice, and Patrick Moraz, and Bill Bruford leaving, and Tony Kaye, and Peter Banks… All through the 70s they'd put up with it. It's fascinating that an audience can be that cruel sometimes."

Especially when the target of their ire was only trying to keep the band alive. "My brother and I were always big Yes fans, right the way through the 70s, from *The Yes Album* onwards." Trevor Horn reflects now. "I even liked *Tales From Topographic Oceans*! We used to play it when we were building our recording studio around the time it came out. We'd be doing the building work, and that music was perfect to put on. By the end of the 70s, *Going For The One* was a brilliant record. But *Tormato* wasn't anywhere near as good, so I slightly lost interest in them at that point — only slightly."

Horn was not alone in wondering if Yes's best days were behind them. As the new decade began, with new sounds and new styles, you could be forgiven for assuming that — despite stemming the tides of fashion with the sprightly *Going For The One* — Yes, riven by internal friction, had played their last trump card. The departing Anderson had grown frustrated at what the music industry wanted: "I didn't care about the almighty dollar," he says. "I just wanted to make music we could be proud of."

Buggles were to reinvent the roundabout. "Geoff Downes and I had this huge hit with *Video Killed The Radio Star* — the first video ever played on MTV — and soon we had the same manager as Yes," says Horn. "That's really how it happened. Chris Squire liked the production on our second single, *Living In The Plastic Age*, and invited us to his house.

"We drove down to where he was living then, in Virginia Water. At some point during the evening I said to him: 'I've got this song that might suit Yes.' It was *Fly From Here*. I played it to him and he said: 'We'll do that if you come down to rehearsals next week.' I said: 'Do you want me to show the song to Jon Anderson?' He said: 'No, no. Jon won't be there… for a while.'

"So we went in to rehearsals with Yes. Which was an extraordinary experience. I'd played in studios, but a band like Yes, close up — the rhythm section is like nothing else I'd ever heard in my life. And for me, to stand among them while they're doing it… They already had loads of music worked out, like *Tempus Fugit*, they just needed lyrics, songs.

"I kept saying: 'When's Jon Anderson coming down?' They were still being vague about that. Then suddenly Chris said: 'Why don't you guys join the band? I was like: 'Get out of it!' Three nights at Madison Square Garden, singing Yes songs? The thought of it was terrifying. But I thought, once in a lifetime you're going to get an opportunity like this. Are you going to say no to it? So I didn't."

Squire's recollections dovetail. "I'd met them [Downes and Horn] in our office, around the time Jon and Rick had gone off to do their solo ventures. And there was Geoff, a keyboard player, and Trevor, a singer. So I said: 'You should think about joining Yes.' They didn't have too much time to think about it, and pretty much went: 'Good idea.'

"We got stuck in and started working on new material. People thought I was mad for assuming it would work. I wasn't sure it would. But it did. And the *Drama* album is one of the most respected Yes albums now."

"It was a great area for it to go into," reckons Yes drummer Alan White.

Look, no hands: the Drama-era line-up live in 1980.

"Steve, Chris and I were rehearsing and, just by chance, Buggles were rehearsing next door. We all started throwing around some ideas. Next thing we knew, Trevor and Geoff had moved into our room and they became part of the band. Out of that came one of my favourite albums."

Released in August 1980, *Drama* reached No.2 in the UK and made the US Top 20. Even so, surely the resistance and scepticism from some fans had an unnerving effect on the band?

"Yes," Squire concedes, "but that was totally weird. Geoff and Trevor were huge Yes fans, even though they'd just had the biggest pop single in the world, ever. And I certainly didn't mind a bit of commerciality coming into Yes. So it worked out well. We made a great album, when we were under a lot of pressure to get it done in a short time.

"There was already a massive American tour sold out. It had been initially booked, basically, as having Jon's and Rick's involvement. Yet, in retrospect, when we showed up with Trevor and Geoff, people generally liked it. It wasn't a major hiccup, somehow. We did four nights at Madison Square Garden – they gave us an award for having done 16 sold-out nights since Yes's career began. And of course since then we've done a lot more. I don't know what the record is, but we must be up there."

However, Horn isn't convinced that everything was quite as effortless as the bassist implies.

"I tell you, it made me have a lot of respect for Jon Anderson as a singer, a respect which has grown over the years," Horn says. "He's a complete one-off. To have a voice like that, which is high enough and yet strong enough to cut through that rock band and yet isn't some kind of primeval screech, it's something really quite brilliant. People have tried to copy him but no one's come close."

So how close did he come?

"Well, the torch has to be kept burning; people have to keep going, they've got to keep making a living. Musicians want to play. And Yes wasn't all about Jon. Yes was always five voices: four instrumental voices and one human voice. Though Chris and Steve, really, were the main guys."

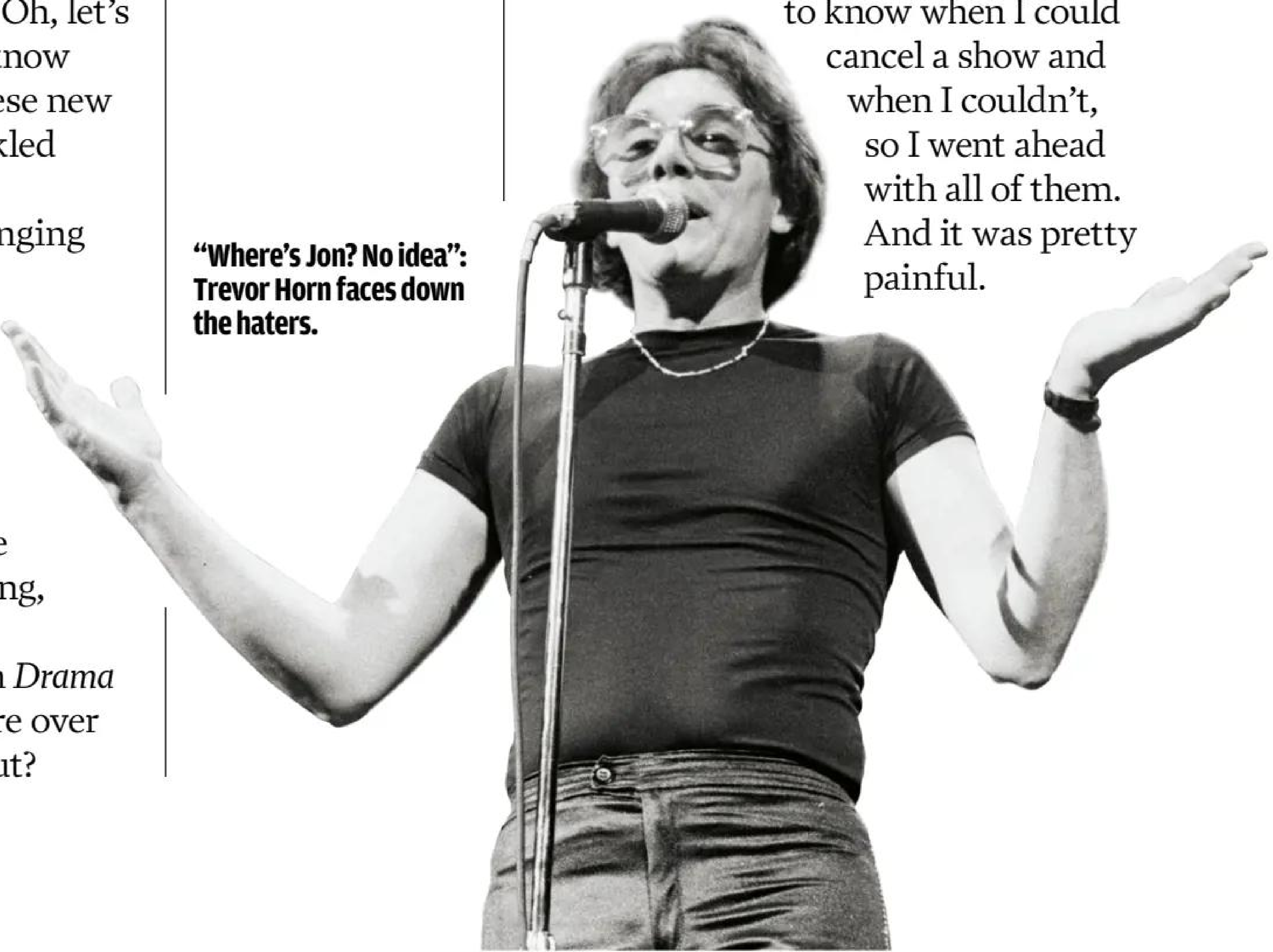
"I remember that period very fondly," says Steve Howe. "It was almost like… the clearance of the haze. Because *Tormato*, and the recordings with Roy Thomas Baker [the ill-fated sessions in Paris that temporarily split the band], were a time of… dispersal. People were starting to live in different countries. Suddenly, when we got the new line-up for *Drama*, it was, 'Oh, let's just get on with this now. We know what we're doing, we've got these new songs, let's do them.' We knuckled down. Although Trevor didn't produce it, his role when not singing or playing was very much like that. And we had great engineers like Hugh Padgham and Gary Langan. So we were excited again. And we weren't really conscious at the time of the heaviness of the album. It felt like a more gripping, modernised version of Yes."

How did Anderson feel when *Drama* appeared? Did he think Yes were over without him? Did he feel left out?

> "With British crowds, it was: 'We want Jon!' 'Get Jon back!' People were quite verbal and aggressive about it." **Steve Howe**

"It didn't bother me," Anderson says dismissively. "I'd lost interest. Chris likes his drama. Still does. Oh gosh, I shouldn't be saying some of these things. But hey, it's true, y'know."

"It was a trip," muses Horn. "I did my best and I learned hard lessons from it. But, like I say, Jon had an exceptional voice. Anybody who tries to follow him has got a hell of a job on their hands. We had 44 shows across America, when I'd never really been a singer before. It was hard going towards the end. My voice was shot, and I wasn't experienced enough to know when I could cancel a show and when I couldn't, so I went ahead with all of them. And it was pretty painful.



"Where's Jon? No idea": Trevor Horn faces down the haters.

GETTY X3

Chris Squire: "Likes his drama," according to Jon Anderson.

"One of the best things was that it made me a bit fearless about anything. After you've been through that, nothing seems particularly frightening. There were kids coming up in America who were more interested in Buggles than in Yes. But Buggles was just a name we'd given to some songs we'd written, I was really a record producer."

"I suppose they found it challenging because it was the first time we'd changed the vocalist," adds Howe. "When Trevor sang the *Drama* stuff it was spectacular. He'd always said that he couldn't do certain things. But we carried on doing them – not against his wishes, exactly, but he'd say something wasn't working and then bravely go on, where others might have said: 'Sod this, I'll get shot.' And while we had the belief behind us from our audience, and within ourselves, that we could do this, we did it.

"When we got that backlash, though, it got a bit cruel. One restless drunk you can override, but the cracks came when more of the audience started to rebel. There was a level of undermining. And as soon as anyone in the band is put off doing what he's supposed to, we're all screwed, we're over. We've always been sympathetic with Trevor. He can remind us he told us some of it would be difficult, but, with a mix of perseverance and over-confidence, we'd say: 'Oh, you'll be all right. It'll be fine!' He was right. He's very intelligent."

Although Horn was to stop singing for Yes, he stayed on to produce their next album, the blockbusting *90125* (still the band's biggest-selling record). Fans eventually accepted that he was doing his best for the Yes cause. Horn explains: "I don't know… I tried. I've always wanted to help to keep Yes going, I suppose. I hope they don't hate me too much. If they do, there's not a lot I can do about it, really."

Horn's subsequent work in various phases with the band has done plenty. "I've always thought it was a great idea to do interesting, complicated music that isn't necessarily clichéd," he says. "But I didn't want to go back to being the singer. If you play rock'n'roll in big stadiums for a while it does start to affect you. And I didn't want to be affected."

Some were, though. Despite the commercial success of *Drama*, Yes were soon declared to be over – officially. Management released a statement to that effect in March 1981. "Yeah," mutters Squire. "I didn't really understand what happened there."

Horn pursued his soon-to-be-illustrious production career and founded ZTT Records. Howe and Downes formed Asia with bassist/vocalist John Wetton and drummer Carl Palmer. Squire and White began sessions with Jimmy Page.

"Trevor's heart was moving into becoming a producer rather than a singer," Squire recalls. "At the same time, Steve and Geoff, who were getting along very well, thought they'd be better off going with Asia. So that left Alan and I sitting around. Which we didn't mind, as we'd worked so hard through the 70s – so many tours, so many albums. It was good to have a breather. Then, after John Bonham passed away, we worked with Jimmy."

The trio called themselves XYZ (ex-Yes-and-Zeppelin). "Jimmy wanted to get back into playing," Squire continues. "We just had to go and cheer him up, really, and get him back in the studio. He enjoyed that. There was talk of Robert Plant coming down and joining the project, but I suppose it was a little early for him to think about doing another thing after Zeppelin had come to an abrupt halt.

"After XYZ got put on the back burner, we hooked up with Trevor Rabin and decided to bring him in, Tony Kaye came back in on keyboards, and we worked on a new project from the ground up called Cinema. I got Trevor Horn to agree to produce it, Atlantic Records gave us a budget and liked what they heard, and that was all looking good… Then the European head of Atlantic said: 'Y'know, of course, if you asked Jon to come back you could call it Yes – and we could have a much bigger album.' And I said, 'All right, I'll see if he's interested.' Turned out that he was."

That album was *90125*, released in 1983. It didn't just launch another iteration of Yes, it opened up an unexpected chapter of their career.

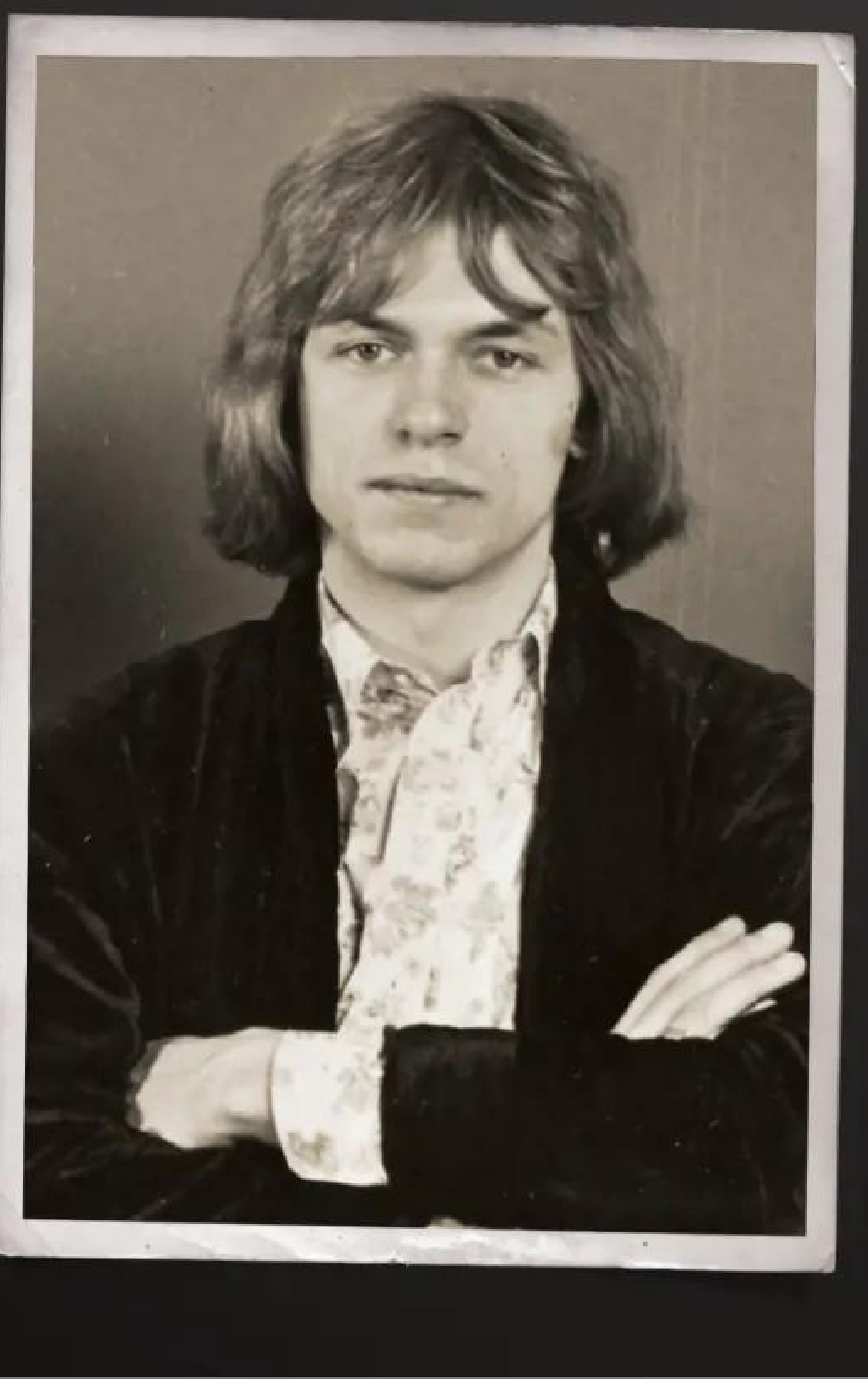
THE CLASSIC ROCK INTERVIEW

STEVE HOWE

He could have been known only as the guitarist who rode a *White Bicycle* with proto-psychedelic Brit-rockers Tomorrow. Instead he joined Yes, and with them, Asia, solo and more has enjoyed a hugely successful and acclaimed career as a member of prog royalty.

Interview: **Mick Wall** Portrait: **Will Ireland**

Steve Howe is one of those people to whom photographs no longer do justice. Approaching his seventy-third birthday, the polite, engaging English gentleman *Classic Rock* meets today in the restaurant of a London hotel is far removed from the cadaverous, wispy-haired figure of his publicity shots. He's still scarecrow-thin and ghost-grey-skinned, but alert and warm in person. A lifetime of being one of the (many) leading lights in Yes, a group whose music never knowingly stooped for the merely catchy when opulent melodrama and maze-like intricacies were always within reach, has left Howe sitting atop the mountain, in terms of reputation, fame and guitar-artistry. Although it's the decades of first vegetarianism, then devotion to macrobiotics and long-form transcendental meditation, you feel, that has given him his ageless aura.



ALAMY

Don't mistake any of this for some sort of old-school hippie-flakery, though. Howe was born in the post-war rubble of Holloway, norf-London, the youngest of four siblings. His parents, he says, were, "very strict". But he always knew he "was going to find some other way of getting through my life, that didn't involve a regular job".

He began playing guitar at 12, playing in school bands, joined his semi-pro group, The Syndicats at 17, released his first single, a cover of Chuck Berry's *Maybellene,* at 18, and joined The In-Crowd, who had just had a minor chart hit with a version of Otis Redding's *That's How Strong My Love Is,* just a few months later.

When The In-Crowd transmogrified into Tomorrow – now recalled as one of the proto-psychedelic Brit-rockers of the acid-rained Summer of Love – he glimpsed the future. "I was ready to really show the world, to improvise."

He has continued to demonstrate that ability ever since, mainly through the prism of Yes, but also, unexpectedly at the time, via the power balladry of Asia, GTR, ABWH and any number of solo albums, one-off collaborations and attendant musical wizardry. Later this year he tours again with Yes, revisiting their 1974 album *Relayer,* although only Howe and drummer Alan White from the current line-up played on it. He also has solo shows planned for the autumn, a new book, *All My Yesterdays,* out in April, and a solo album, titled *Love Is,* "fifty-fifty instrumental and songs" released at the same time.

Tomorrow, which you formed with singer Keith West, who was about to become famous in his own right as singer of *Grocer Jack (Excerpt From A Teenage Opera)*, came along just when albums had become more important than singles. Experimentation, expanding the idea of pop music. It wasn't just Tomorrow, it was Pink Floyd, Soft Machine, Jimi Hendrix, all led by The Beatles. How self-conscious of that were you at the time?

Yes, with Tomorrow we were in the center of it all, and we loved that. We were just having a great time. The UFO club, concerts at the Alexandra Palace, or at Earls Court, all the psychedelic things, we were part of it all. And the world was our ▷

Howe, Rick Wakeman and Jon Anderson recording Yes's *Fragile* at Advision Studios in London, August 20, 1971.

Howe (second from left) with his early band Tomorrow in 1967.

oyster. We were most probably living in Chelsea, all living it up, on seventy-five quid a week.

Yet it all fell apart after one, albeit mind-blowing, album. Why?

We were doing very well, but unfortunately none of us knew how to hold a band together. So the record was late, it came out in 1968. So it was only really the single *My White Bicycle* that people can associate correctly with Tomorrow. But when we played on stage, we played with such conviction and speed and excitement. We had a kind of edgy craziness to it. And this allowed more improvisation. So a song would start, and then, for example, we'd go off on some imaginative journey. We weren't the only band doing it. But we did it in a particular way that people liked.

Did you know those other guys – Floyd, Hendrix and so on? Did you see them as rivals in any way?

Yeah. We saw them as equals, sometimes. But we were all very egotistical, as far as "We are good. We're going to blow this band off stage." But when you're young and naïve you've got this bullshit factor that helps you through a lot. But as I said, we didn't understand how to hold a band together. So I then had a couple of leaner years, sixty-eight to sixty-nine, in a group called Bodast.

An even more short-lived and far less influential quartet that had the misfortune to be signed to the Tetragrammaton label, which went out of business just before the scheduled release date for the Bodast album. How would you nutshell that story?

Bodast was a struggling, kind of desperate band, really. But what we were honouring was that we wanted to do all our music, and to hell with the world, you know what I mean? And we paid the price. The album was good. But that band just struggled. Everything was a struggle. We got let down.

> **"None of us wanted to stand still, play blues riffs or do anything that most other bands were doing."**

How much did LSD have to do with the kind of music you were making at this point?

I saw other people going a bit in there with that, and I thought: "Well, I've got to try this stuff." But I always minimised what I took. And I thought: "Well, that was enough for me!" Thank God I didn't take any more of the stuff. It influenced my life for many years, yeah. But I was young enough to absorb the transition that it maybe took me through. The heightened awareness of nature was the most beautiful thing about it. I guess in a way the hippies were the original eco-friendly guys.

Back to the garden?

We were in the garden. We loved animals. When you're seeing creatures that you share the world with, under those influences, it's quite mesmerising. So we had a lot of fun. We giggled around a lot. We listened to music, and thought: "Oh, this is wonderful." The whole thing was like an event, a constant event. By the time I joined Yes [in 1970], I think the influence was still there.

Had original Yes guitarist Peter Banks left the band by then?

No, not really. But they were trying to cover their bases and then telling him. So basically, without much ado, that was when it all clicked in with me. Because when I got there it was fairly easy to see that this was great, and hey, I wanted to join. And they saw something in me, and said: "We'll offer you the gig. Twenty-five quid a gig." So I thought: "I can just about live on that." I had the belief that the people I was joining with were very talented, very individual, and I think that's what I'd been looking for, individual values in people.

Were you already on a mission, to broaden the musical scope?

Yeah, I think that's a big point. We didn't have a hit we had to play every night yet. It was really ground upwards. To me it felt like a new band. I think they sensed that a little bit, too, that this was going to be something they'd really want to commit to, because of the quality that we'd created together. And that was, not least of all, because of our writing and rehearsing in Devon, where we kind of got our heads together, in songs like *I've Seen All Good People* and *Perpetual Change* and *Yours Is No Disgrace*. These were not small, dismissible works. Because underneath it, none of us wanted to stand still, play blues riffs or do anything that most other

MAIN: GETTY; INSET: ALAMY

bands were doing. And the fact that [Yes vocalist] Jon Anderson and I became a strong songwriting team didn't hurt the band at all.

Why did you and Jon become the real songwriting force, not, say, you and Chris?
Chris was a great writer, but you really didn't sense he wrote a great deal. So his output was lower than Jon's and mine. And Rick [Wakeman, keyboards] didn't write for Yes, really. Bill Bruford had a weird way of writing, because he'd write ideas on the piano, although he was a drummer. So the way you could write in Yes wasn't that you went home, and you came back with some written music with words on it. Not at all. You just could sit in a room and go: "I got this, I got this, put that over there, and let's just go to that." And then somebody at the same time said: "No, we need a riff here." The band would actually invent music, a lot of it, through that method, where it was purely spontaneous in the room. Of course, you had to force your music across, otherwise somebody else would change it, and it wouldn't be what you wanted. It was a creative interplay.

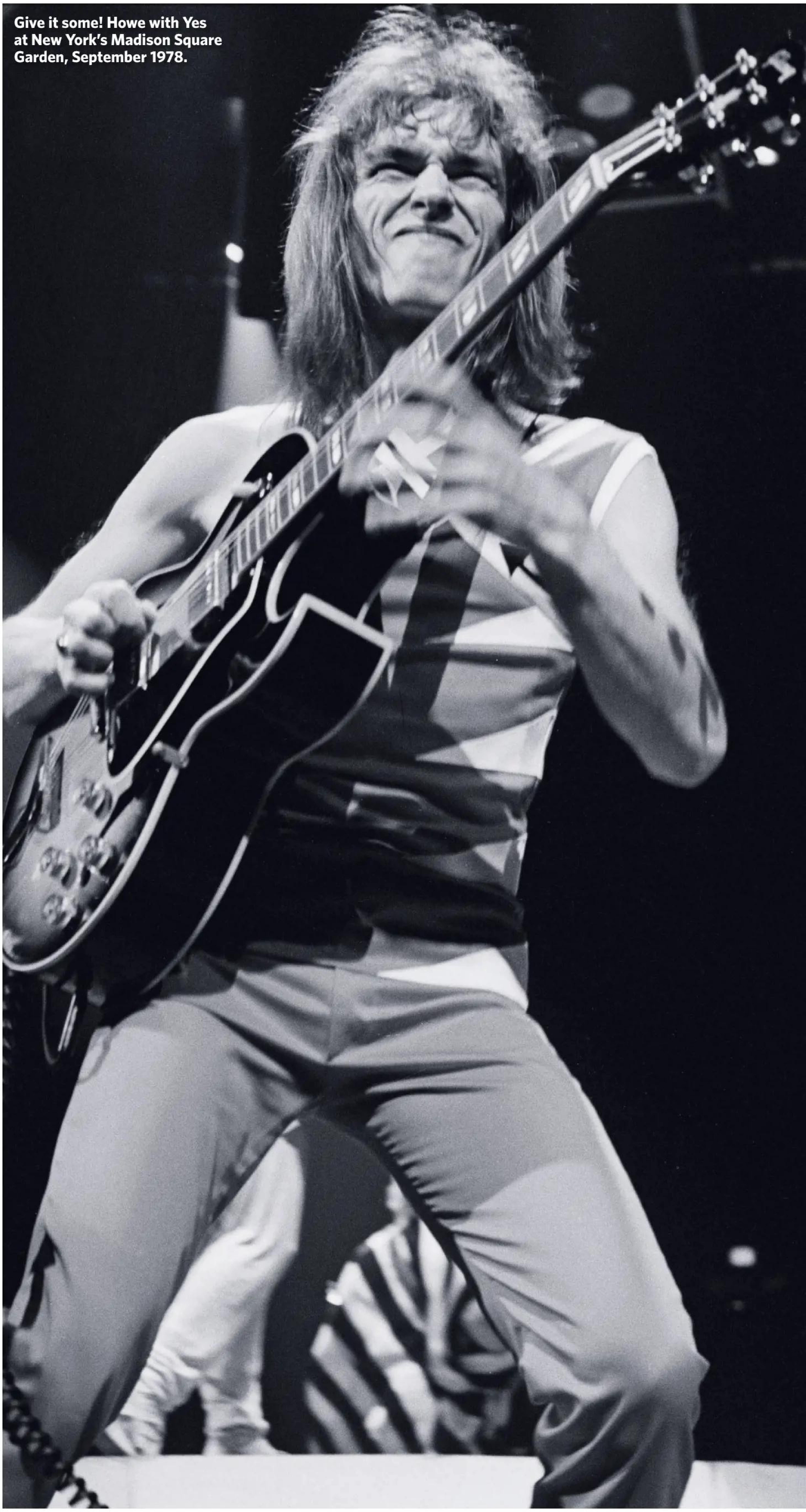
> **"What Yes did was take simplistic things and complicate them a little bit, for our amusement."**

Would you and Jon work on your own to write, and then present some ideas?
Well, we did do that. But amazingly, we did most of it on the road. Jon and I would be like, "Do you want to come to my room? I've got this song." And we just started collaborating in that sense, that we could both share ideas. I've even got cassettes where I play him stuff, and he goes, "Oh, that's really good. Have you got anything else?" And I'd play him something else. "Oh, you got that? Let's use that."

I was writing melodies, didn't care whether they were sung or played. So there were a lot of musical ideas, and Jon had some left-field ones. Sometimes it was great to have Jon's simplicity. What Yes did was take simplistic things and complicate them a little bit, for our amusement. Sometimes we'd take the chords out and just play riffs. So the band had songs, melodies, riffs, three-part harmonies – a technical proficiency high enough for anybody to spontaneously say: "Why don't we do something like that?" and we would get there.

With that technical proficiency came groundbreaking albums such as *Fragile, Close To The Edge*, the double *Tales Of Topographic Oceans, Relayer*… the sort of one-track-per-side records Bob Harris would drool over on *The Old Grey Whistle Test,* and their critics still look down on as the kind of thing that public schoolboys masturbated to.

Yes, meanwhile, became one of the biggest, bands on the planet, achieving Led Zeppelin-levels of success. And with that came that deadly scourge of all successful groups: ego. By the mid-70s Yes were becoming known as over-indulged male ▷


Give it some! Howe with Yes at New York's Madison Square Garden, September 1978.

GETTY

Yes (and inset) in 1980: (l-r) Geoff Downes, Steve Howe, Alan White (behind drums) Trevor Horn, Chris Squire.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY X2

divas, the band's five members split into two camps: the veggie, meditating life-affirmers (leaders: Howe and Anderson) and the party-hearty rock bad boys (Wakeman and bassist Chris Squire).

As Yes became giants, people started to leave. First Bruford in 1973, then Wakeman a year later. Then Wakeman came back then left again. (And would later come back again – and leave again.) By the start of the eighties, even Anderson and Squire had gone. Why?

Unlike most bands, we… I mean, there's five people in the band, and four of them are getting really tired, and this one guy is a bit flaky. And he goes away, and he says: "I don't really want to be in the room." It was like: "Oh, wow. Well, who could we get in next?" There was no fear. And we kept wanting to kind of step up the game. So those ten years were bumpy behind the scenes. And we didn't really want to talk about it too much. We didn't want people to know at the time. Even people who stayed had problems. Where we had to say: "Well, look, if you don't get this problem sorted, we're going to have to say to you you can't do it and carry on." So it was a test for people. Jon and I didn't make it very hard for ourselves. We floated through that, in a quite cosmic, slightly spiritual, slightly out-there way.

But it was harder for some other people. And they got indulgent, and sometimes we had to say, "Whoa! This is going way too far."

That was the era though, wasn't it? You're feeling ill? Have a line of blow.

We wanted to avoid that. We'd all been pretty spaced-out in the sixties. We'd started to get out of that, and we banned substances like you just mentioned. Obviously, people broke those rules occasionally, and usually, were the people who'd come up against the most difficult times. So most of us who got through it basically held it together, while somebody else was flaky. We were tolerant of it, to a degree. But also, once there was a grouping of four, with one person out of step, we were a strong force to reckon with.

Tell us about *Drama*, the 1980 Yes album where Anderson and Wakeman were replaced by Buggles duo Trevor Horn and Geoff Downes.

> **"It was disappointing that Yes couldn't do more stuff with Trevor Horn. But I think he felt he wasn't supported enough."**

That was the big breakaway from all the traditions of Yes. Chris, Alan and I basically became a trio, with nobody else in the band. Chris said to me: "Have you heard the Buggles?" I said: "Yeah. *Video Killed The Radio Star* is great, isn't it?" He says: "Yeah, but have you heard the album?" So I put it on. And I went: "Jesus, this is good!" It's not pop! I mean, *Video* is totally, but the rest of the album's quite kind of spacey and clever, and Trevor's singing great. And it's lyrically very strong. I thought: "They'll never want to leave The Buggles, that's a hit band." But they came down, and we offered them a gig, and they went: "We'd love to do this." So they delayed their second album and gave us full tilt.

***Drama* was a big hit in the UK, less so in the US. Good memories, though?**

Trevor came through as a lyricist, and Geoff was a new kind of keyboard player, the new breed. *Drama* was a revelation. But nobody in America was fully clear who was in this band at the moment. Or that maybe the other guys hadn't left yet or something. But we went out, and people went: "They're playing Madison Square Garden, with the *Drama* line-up." So we had a terrific time.

Yet at the end the group split completely. Why?

Trevor and Geoff needed to do the second Buggles album. Also, Trevor was unhappy that we were not prepared to change keys of old songs so he could sing them. Maybe that could have been fixed. But then Chris [and Alan White] went off with Jimmy Page for this XYZ thing [the ill-fated supergroup formed in the wake of the official Zeppelin split, then eventually abandoned].

Which brings us to Asia. Most musicians thank the gods for finding global success just once, but you went out and did it a second time with John Wetton, Carl Palmer and Geoff Downes.

It was disappointing that Yes couldn't do more stuff with Trevor. But I think he felt he wasn't supported enough, which I understand now. But by then I'd developed a good writing relationship with Geoff, and could have built a new line-up of Yes around just me and Geoff, but I was tired by then. I'd had ten years of helping hold the band together, and I wanted a break from that. So I had a break, and had a look at what was going on in the rest of the world. Then [legendary Geffen Records A&R exec] John Kalodner called and said: "How you do fancy working with John Wetton?

NIELS VAN IPEREN/GETTY

Friends reunited?: the ill-fated *Union* line-up in full.

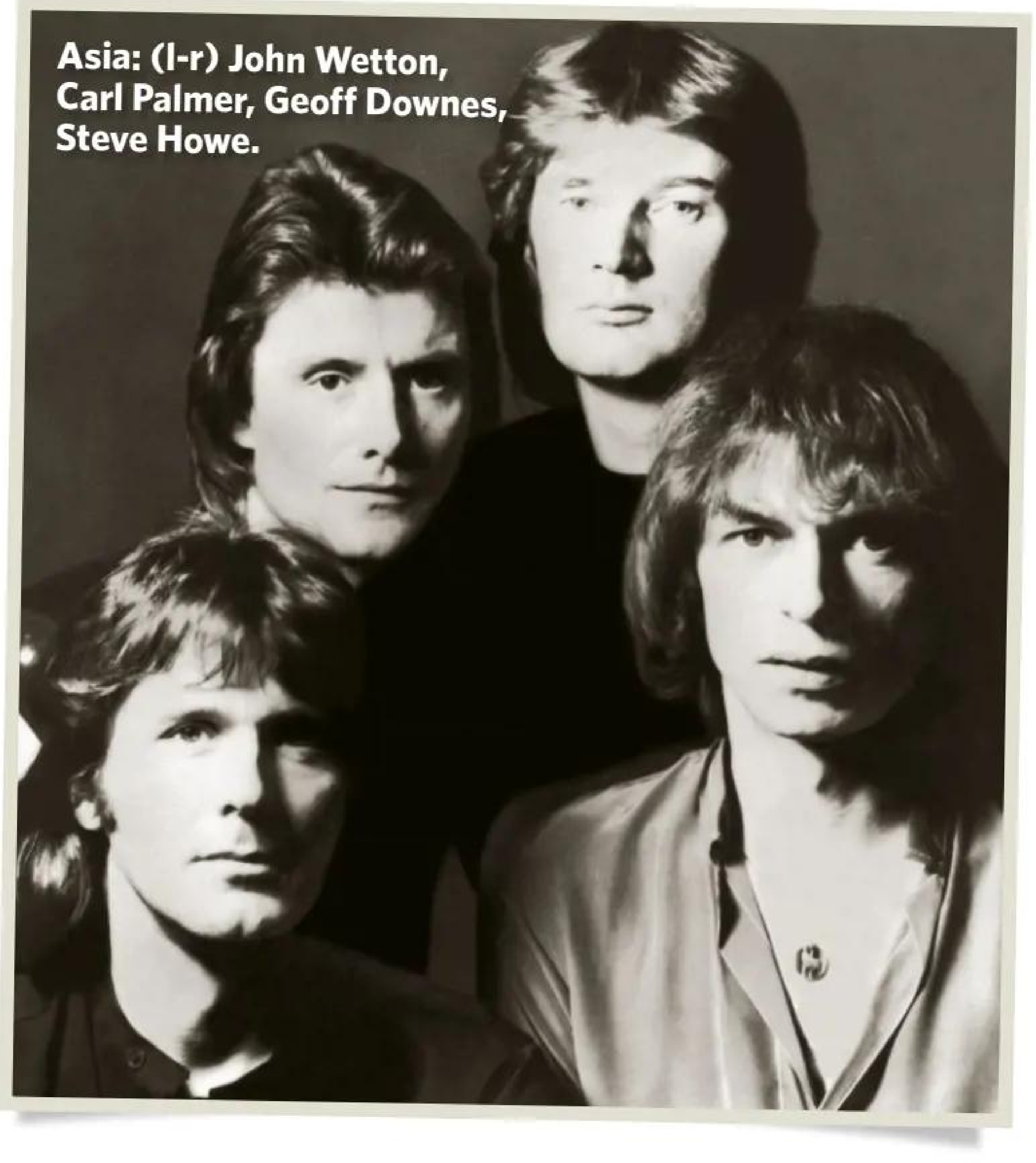
Wetton was a veteran of a number of high-level British rock bands, notably King Crimson, Roxy Music and UK, the latter including original Yes drummer Bill Bruford. Did you know John Wetton personally?
No, but I knew of him, of course. I knew that if he'd been in King Crimson then he was serious. We spent two days jamming, just the two of us doing all this crazy stuff. I thought that's where we were going. Then John said: "I'd like the band to be more song-based." I said: "Great. I'm happy with that." That's when we came up with things like *One Step Closer* and *Without You*. Then John said: "What I'd really like to do is get a drummer like Carl Palmer." I thought that sounded amazing. ELP drummer, Yes guitarist, King Crimson bassist/vocalist…

So Carl came in and he was impressive! You don't need to hear him, you just have to watch him [laughs]. Then I said: "We need a keyboard player." They said: "Just be a trio." I said: "No, no, no, you've got to get this Geoff Downes guy in!" So I brought Geoff in to play with Asia too, because I liked working with a guy who was at the edge of technology too, because I was doing that with my guitars and effects, and I was trying to have the best sounds. We also had a strange limbo where we tried out other writers and singers. Roy Wood was one, who was a lovely, lovely guy but not really the right fit for us.

Wasn't another one Trevor Rabin, who ironically didn't get the gig but later replaced you in the re-formed Yes?
That's not a very public story. We were looking for someone that could add to the writing, but again the chemistry just wasn't there. Another one was a guy called Robert Fleischman, who had sung with Journey briefly. In the end we stuck with the four of us and everything just clicked from there. The whole machinery behind Yes jumped ship and came with us, management, crew, etcetera.

"I don't like the stories you hear about me and John Wetton falling out. It was never that simple."

For all Asia's obvious musical prowess, the band's big hit, *Heat Of The Moment*, was the epitome of slick-sounding, early-eighties power-balladry. More Journey, in fact, than Yes. How did that happen?



Asia: (l-r) John Wetton, Carl Palmer, Geoff Downes, Steve Howe.

ULLSTEIN BILD DTL/GETTY

Well, the production was a bit Journey-esque. That was down to Mike Stone, who'd co-produced *Escape*, which was a huge album for Journey. But *Heat Of The Moment* was the last song we recorded for the *Asia* album. By then we'd already done stuff like *Time Again* and *Wildest Dreams*, which were very progressive. There was also this sweetness in *Time Will Tell*. But as soon as I stacked up the guitar and John started singing, we knew we had something special in *Heat Of The Moment*.

A huge hit single, it helped send Asia to No.1 in America. What was that like?
It was wonderful, of course. It felt like vindication after the way Yes had fallen apart, really. But I'd already experienced highs like headlining sold-out arena tours of the States in Yes. As had Carl. But for John it was something else, I think. The pressure was really on, and I think the sheer scale of the success had an effect on him that made him quite introverted in a way. Very cut off.

Your personal relationship with John also suffered, didn't it?
Well, I don't like the stories you hear about us falling out. It was never that simple. The whole thing just got out of control. None of us were happy with the mix of the second album, *Alpha*. The tour was crazy – too many champagne breakfasts, you might say. That's when I started driving myself to shows rather than fly with the band. But we ended up pulling the final dates. It was a mess. People started forgetting parts, or running orders, or whether it was the single version or the album version we were playing. That's when we spoke to John. He said: "It's not all me." Yes, but if you're singing and playing and you go somewhere we don't know, we're going to have problems. At that point it started to fizzle out. ▷

FUTURE/JOSEPH BRANSTON

While the end of Asia was messy, with Howe being fired from the group, Yes were about to embark on their own new adventure with the *90125* album and the revamped line-up starring Howe's replacement on guitar, Asia reject Trevor Rabin. Howe laughs about it now, and acknowledges the astonishing success the single *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* brought the group. But can't resist the teeniest dig when he says he thought the video for *Owner* "looked like Duran Duran". Musically, he says, "it was like a whole new band. The bass and drums were the most radically different. I thought there was even a slight Asia aspect to it."

Not to be outdone, Howe formed a surprisingly fruitful partnership with former Genesis guitarist Steve Hackett in the short-lived but amazingly successful outfit GTR, whose self-titled only album hit the US Top 10 and gave him another chart single with *When The Heart Rules The Mind*. Behind the scenes, though, there were tales of the pair not getting along, with rumours that Hackett would not stay on the same floor of a hotel as Howe and the rest of the band. Too damn noisy, apparently.

Howe then found himself back on the Yes trail. First with the cumbersomely named but musically wondrous Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe (ABWH), which bled into an unctuous collaboration between that line-up of Yes and the *90125* guys with the almost ironically titled *Union* in 1991. Later came his one-off reunions with Asia, a further expulsion from Yes for one album, to where Howe is now, de facto leader of all he surveys.

The *Union* album was interesting. The tour less so. Too many cooks?

It was immensely complicated even before we'd put our tracks with their tracks. There was all this signing off on things to be done, and everybody had to agree to this and that and blah, blah, blah. But that whole album became a hodgepodge. I did a lot of things that didn't end up on that album. Then people wanted to be on stage all of the time. The best were in the UK where there weren't several people playing the same things at the same time and there was far less spotlight-hogging. The hardest was the first leg in America, where I wasn't ready for what Trevor Rabin was gonna do on *Yours Is No Disgrace*. Then after a few nights everybody was going to him saying: "Steve's unhappy." Because I was. It was little bit more heavy metal than I could put up with. This was Yes, after all. By the time we got to Japan at the end of the tour it was becoming a real struggle.

Jon Anderson finally bowed out after the 2001 album *Magnification*, amid much public recrimination. How is the love-hate relationship between the two of you now?

I'm not going to tell you a lot. But in the seventies Jon and I were a great team. After that, in the eighties, that role got diminished. Then we came together again for ABWH, and the Yes continuation right up to the final split in 2004. That's an awful lot of time. Stimulus, agreement and like-mindedness most definitely fluctuated continually. But it was never impossible to work together. But it wasn't as dream-like as the seventies.

PRESS/TOP: GOTTLIEB BROS/PRESS

Yes in 2019: (l-r) Steve Howe, Jon Davison, Billy Sherwood, Alan White, Geoff Downes.

> **"Jon and I get on really well now, but it's probably better that we don't work all the time together. But nobody knows what the future holds."**

Is that door still firmly closed?

Jon and I get on really well now. We have the history and the friendship. But it's probably better that we don't attempt to work all the time together – because of this and that. But nobody knows what the future holds.

Time waits for no one, though. Chris Squire died in 2015, John Wetton in 2017. How did those losses make you feel?

Chris was having some difficulties for some time. We had to cancel some shows once for him to have some [heart] surgery. The year before Chris passed was really touch and go. Chris spoke to me on the phone two days before he passed saying: "You know, I think I'm going to be alright." But he had a relapse and there was no coming back. We were really messed up by that, losing somebody you love. Whereas when John went it was slightly more of a shock. It was similar in some respects, in that John had some problems. But he seemed to be fine. I mean I knew he was unwell but it was hard to believe that John had passed away. More sort of catastrophic.

You also suffered a dreadful family loss when your son Virgil died in 2017.

He was forty-one and had a heart attack of some kind and we don't really know any more. It's our biggest tragedy of our personal lives in our family to lose Virgil, since we loved him so much. We'd just formed a musical partnership as well. We'd just recorded *Nexus*, and we brought it out even though it was a couple of months after he passed away. He was really proud of the record. It was really his music and my collaboration. So it's a record that has sadness about it. If he hadn't passed away we would have immersed ourselves in it and enjoyed it so much more. But then there was Greg Lake too, who I didn't know that well but who didn't have the longevity that he should have. Then Keith Emerson. A very tragic period. You've got to say that some of these guys pushed the envelope and lived their lives to the fullest, and others just didn't get the chance to. So, you know, life is about tragedy as much as it's about joy.

Do you think about your own mortality?

I believe that you're here and nobody knows what happens afterwards. It could be something about our spirit that's more than just our minds and our bodies, that there is something else. And that's a beautiful thing. I'm not anticipating coming back. But whether you go to a different place, whether you go to another sphere… Although I've never adopted a religion as such, that doesn't mean I'm not spiritual. Part of what's right about being in this world is that you care about other people but you also take a little care of yourself – and hope in some way that, yes, there's some sort of meeting place where we can all meet up again. That would be nice.

Steve Howe in the studio with his son Virgil, who passed away in 2017.

Brave New World

With their 1983 album *90125,* propelled by the irresistible smash hit single *Owner Of A Lonely Heart,* **Yes** stormed the charts and became MTV darlings with a brand new pop sound. It revived their career and introduced a whole new audience to prog rock. Yet just months before, the band hadn't even existed. This is the inside story of one of music's least likely comebacks…

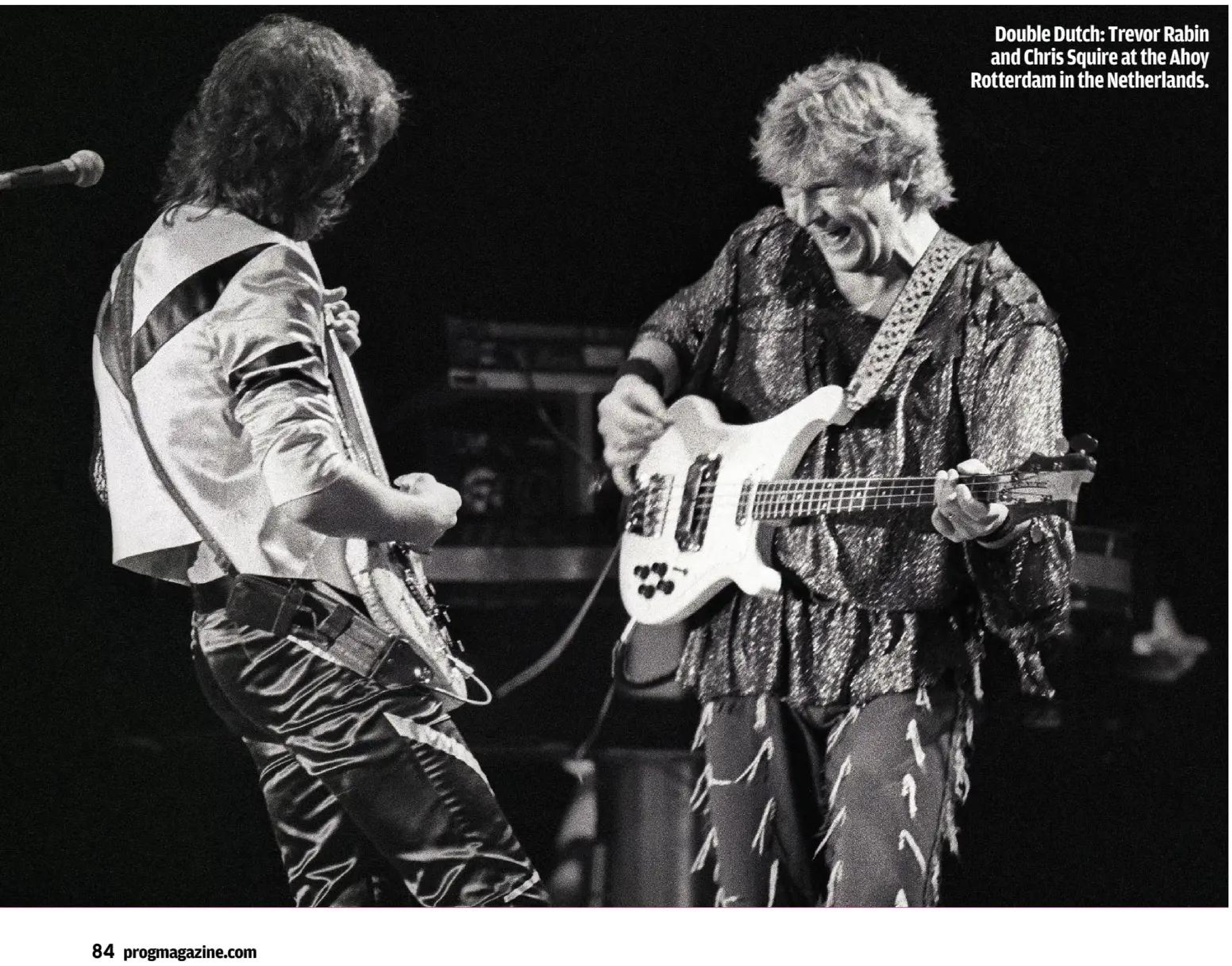
Words: Malcolm Dome **Portrait:** Ebet Roberts/Getty

By 1981, Yes had disappeared. As the new decade dawned, the line-up that had given us *Drama* the previous year had cracked and splintered. Keyboard player Geoff Downes and guitarist Steve Howe became founding members of Asia and enjoyed huge success in their own right. Vocalist Trevor Horn was on an upward trajectory as a producer. And that left bassist Chris Squire and drummer Alan White trying to find a cohesive musical direction.

"Atlantic, to whom Yes were signed, were determined to keep Alan and I working together," recalled Chris Squire in 2010. "We had tried to form a new band, XYZ, in 1981 with Jimmy Page, but that had fizzled out. And then in 1982 Trevor Rabin's name came up. Brian Lane, our former manager, had actually played me some of his tracks in 1979 and I thought it was the new Foreigner album. But three years later, we agreed to meet up with him."

While Squire and White contemplated where life might lead in the post-Yes era, multi-instrumentalist Rabin had been facing an exciting, albeit uncertain, future. After releasing three well-received but commercially disappointing solo albums, he relocated to Los Angeles from the UK after signing to Geffen.

"I went through an intense writing phase out there, when I effectively came up with the songs which would appear on *90125,*" he explains. "But Geffen weren't impressed, so they dropped me."



Double Dutch: Trevor Rabin and Chris Squire at the Ahoy Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

ROB VERHORST/GETTY

After getting some interest from other labels, Rabin eventually agreed a deal with Atlantic, and it was Phil Carson, one of the most powerful men at the company, who put him in touch with Squire and White. "He felt that I needed a rhythm section," Rabin says. "So, the three of us agreed to meet at a sushi bar in London. Chris was late, which I was to discover was usual for him, but we eventually went back to his place and jammed. I have to say, it wasn't a very good session. But there was clearly a chemistry between us which was worth pursuing."

Squire was a little more blunt about that initial meeting. "We got pissed at my house, then thought it was a good idea to play together. After 10 minutes, we all knew it could work, even though the jam session was rubbish!"

The trio brought in former Yes keyboard player Tony Kaye to complete the line-up.

"Trevor was great at playing guitar and keyboards, but he was something of a virtuoso," reveals the bassist. "What we also needed was someone who could come in and play solid keyboards, to augment what Trevor did; someone very grounded who would add texture to the sound. And I thought immediately of Tony."

Yes in '83, l-r: Alan White, Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Tony Kaye, Trevor Rabin.

> **Phil Carson wanted me to call Jon Anderson and get him involved, and eventually – just to shut him up – I agreed to contact him.**
> ***Chris Squire***

“I was totally against using the name Yes. I wanted this to be seen as a new project, not the continuation of an extinct 70s band.”
Trevor Rabin

The new quartet christened themselves Cinema. In spite of the fact that there were now three former members of Yes in the group, there was no way they were going to revive that band’s name. “I was totally against it,” admits Rabin. “I wanted this to be seen as a new project, and not the continuation of an extinct 70s band.”

Cinema spent eight months working on their material at John Henry’s Rehearsal Studio in North London. Rabin reveals: “What we ended up with was a combination of songs I had originally demoed to get the Geffen deal, plus some stuff Chris came in with, and other tracks we collaborated on from scratch.”

And it was then that Horn came into the picture. “He was actually approached about being the singer for the band,” recalls Rabin. “Chris thought we needed a frontman, someone who just sang. But Trevor and I just didn’t get on at all. In fact, things became very heated between us, and in the end it was decided not to bring him into the band.”

In 2010, Squire concurred on the original reason they approached Horn. “I felt we needed a singer in the band, and I mentioned to Trevor Rabin that maybe the guy for the job was Trevor Horn, who of course I knew from the *Drama* period of Yes. So we met for lunch and I offered him the job of singing in Cinema. But Trevor was really making a name for himself at the time as a producer – he’d already had success with ABC and Dollar – so he didn’t want to give up this new career and join a band. However, Trevor did agree to produce our album, and I was delighted to have him on board.”

However, Rabin didn’t exactly share Squire’s enthusiasm about Horn being the right man to produce the fledgling band’s album.

“I remember thinking he was totally wrong for this project. He was a pop producer, and I was very sceptical about what he could actually do for us. But in the end, I have to admit that Trevor turned out to be exactly the right man for *90125*.”

Yes backstage in July 1984, l-r: Chris Squire, Trevor Rabin, Tony Kaye, Alan White, Jon Anderson.

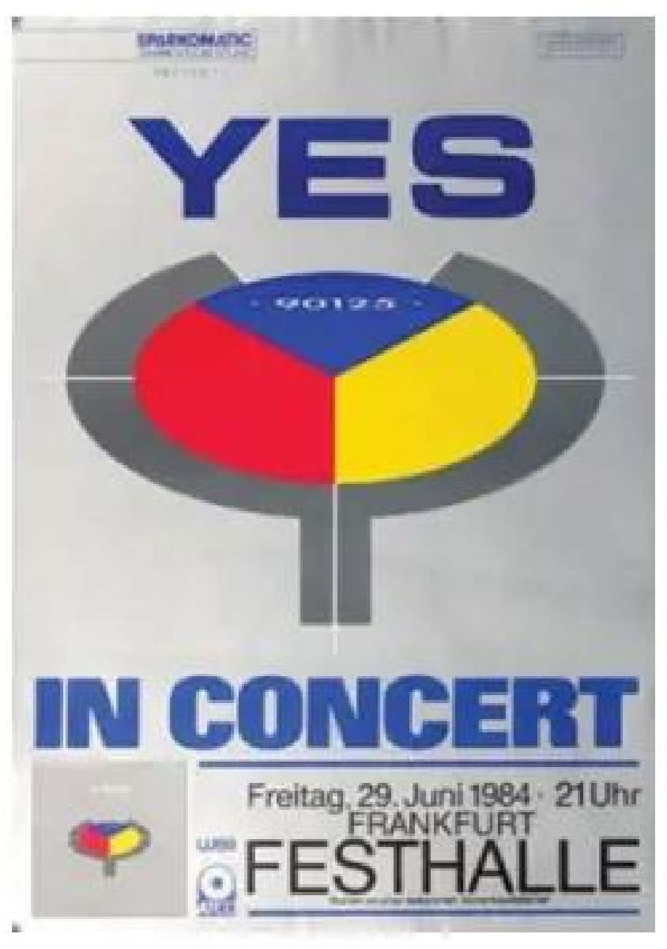
MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

Cinema and Horn went into London’s Sarm East Studios in November 1982 to record the album (they would also work over the next several months at AIR and Sunpark Studios, again in London). And they had virtually the entire album finished when the story took another twist, with the arrival of former singer Jon Anderson.

“Phil Carson came down to Sarm East and liked what we were doing,” explained Squire. “But he kept on and on at us about changing the name to Yes. His logic was that if we were to use the ‘Yes’ tag then we’d have a ready-made audience and the album would be much bigger. He wanted me to call Jon and get him involved, and eventually – just to shut him up – I agreed to contact him.”

At the time, Anderson was working in the South of France on a project inspired by the artist Marc Chagall. But a fateful call from Squire would change all his plans.

A 1984 tour poster featuring the distinctive *90125* artwork by designer Garry Mouat.



“I was in London for a weekend when Chris phoned me,” the singer recalls. “He said he wanted to come over to my place in Knightsbridge and play me some of the music from his new band. We ended up sitting in his Rolls Royce listening to what Cinema had recorded so far and it blew me away. The sound was so fresh. I loved the vocal harmonies, and Trevor Horn’s production was great. I was a big fan of his production style anyway. Chris then asked me if I’d like to sing on the album and join the band. I told him that if I did that then effectively we were making a Yes album, and he replied, ‘Well, that’s the idea.’”

At this juncture, Rabin was unaware of plans to bring in Anderson, although he now appears very sanguine about what happened.

“Obviously, the label didn’t think my vocals were strong enough. But the other guys in the band didn’t want to hurt my feelings so they never confronted me. Recording had gone so far down the line that to replace all my

EBET ROBERTS/GETTY X2

l-r: Chris Squire and Trevor Rabin, 1983.

vocals would have been a huge task. That's why I sing lead vocals on some tracks, although I'd have been happy for Jon to have done them all."

That equitable approach to his new co-vocalist didn't extend to the band's name. the guitarist objected strongly to the band now being known as Yes. "I was still very much against it, but was outvoted," says Rabin.

Despite coming on to the scene rather late, Anderson still had some input into the writing process.

"I changed some of the choruses and added lyrics to certain songs as well. I only had about three weeks in the studio to do my parts, but found it to be a very rewarding experience. I loved working with Trevor Horn as he was always so receptive to any ideas I had."

But Squire ha a different take on the relationship between the returning vocalist and the producer. "Oh, they butted heads quite a lot. At times, there was major friction."

To add to the melodrama in the studio, Kaye had his own problems with Horn. "They didn't get on at all," says Rabin. "So, he left the band before we'd finished the album, and I had to finish the keyboard parts."

Squire, though, had an alternative version on what happened. "Tony actually completed all his work. So, because he wasn't on good terms with Trevor Horn, we suggested he should go home to Los Angeles. But he was never fired from Yes, nor did he quit. The only reason we had Eddie Jobson feature in the video for *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* was because he was around when we shot it. We never talked to Eddie, or anybody, about replacing Trevor."

"We did hold discussions with Eddie about coming into the band for touring," disagrees Rabin. "And we also considered Duncan Mackay. But we got back Trevor in the end because he knew all the parts and with Horn not involved in touring, there was no chance of any of those problems rearing up again."

Rabin recalls the studio sessions as running well behind schedule. "We had a very laissez-faire attitude. There were times when I was in the studio with just one of the engineers doing my parts because Trevor was away working on Malcolm McLaren's *Duck Rock* album. It was typical of the inefficient beast called Yes."

And there were even problems with Horn's final mix, as Squire recalled: "Trevor Rabin wasn't satisfied and did a couple of his own remixes. But the label were very happy with the original mix, and we didn't want to compromise and have a few Rabin mixes alongside the rest from Horn. So we went for the amazing sound that Trevor Horn got for us."

So where did the idea for the album title originate? There's no consensus on this, with both Rabin and Anderson claiming to have come up with the idea. But Squire has his own view.

"The suggestion came from Garry Mouat, who designed the sleeve. We couldn't come up with any suitable title and he thought of using the catalogue number. Actually, it was supposed to be called *89464*. That was to be the album catalogue number. But we were two months late delivering the album [in July 1983], so the release date and the catalogue number changed."

The success of *90125* gave Yes a fresh impetus for a new era of achievement, which is something that Squire acknowledged: "We reinvented Yes," he said in 2010. "Because the album was so fresh, we picked up a new audience. Some 70s diehards might have been upset by what we did. However, it gave us an extra dimension."

"I was delighted with the reaction the album got," adds Rabin. "The fact that *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* was a big

> **“90125 was so successful, whatever we’d done next would have disappointed some people.”**
> ***Chris Squire***

hit gave us a new profile for the MTV age. I was determined this wouldn’t be seen as a continuation of Yes as they were in the 70s, and we got it right. It was a new beginning for Yes, not just another chapter.”

Yes’ *90125*-assisted rejuvenation immediately put them under pressure to deliver a follow-up. “Atlantic wanted a new album done quickly,” says Rabin. It’s the usual story. You have ages to write and record your debut, but only six months or so for the next one. That’s why so many bands find their second album so hard to get right. And as we were effectively a new band, this should be regarded as our second one.”

In typical Yes fashion, they opted to record the album in a lavish Italian studio. And in typical Yes fashion, the idea was better on paper than in reality.

“I knew of Lark Recording Studios which was in Castellodi Carimate, about 25 kilomteres to the north of Milan,” remembers Rabin. “In my mind, if we were altogether in such a location, then it would help the process. I couldn’t have been more wrong! We spent about three months in there, and got very little done. Sure the backing tracks were put down. But that was about it.”

Chris Squire believed the time Yes spent in Italy was wasted for another reason. “We were too caught up in getting the right recording equipment installed and that became more important than the music. This caused a lot of irritation which didn’t help relations between all of us.”

Eventually Trevor Horn, also back in the fold as producer after the success of *90125*. suggested the band relocate to SARM East in London. Rabin admits this failed to improve things.

“We were in there [plus SARM West and Air Studios, also in London] for ages. Far too long. And it was getting us nowhere. Trevor couldn’t seem to motivate us and wee were spending a fortune and getting nowhere.

Yes man Jon Anderson was welcomed back into the fold for *90125*.

ALL GETTY

Above: Trevor Horn, who gave the album an “amazing sound” according to Squire.

“It was an insane situation. Jon Anderson once decided to disappear for a while. We had no idea where he was. But that was typical of what we were up against. Hardly anyone was prepared to take this seriously.”

After several months in London, Horn left the project. “Trevor walked out on us,” Squire stated bluntly in 2010. “He couldn’t deal with the way things weren’t moving along at any sort of pace. And he was also having disagreements with Tony and Jon, which never helped anyone’s mood.”

Now, Rabin took control of things. He went back to LA, working by himself at Southcombe, Westlake and Sunset Sound Studios. “Paul DeVillers came on board as an engineer to work alongside me. I just believed the only way to make sure things were finished properly was for me to head back home with the tapes and spend time to get the mix as good as it could be.

“Paul and I took two months to complete the mix. But this was all done with the approval of the other guys. Chris and Jon were happy for me to do things this way. After throwing away two years and millions of dollars, at least we had an album in the can.”

Rabin believes a lot of the blame should be put on the label’s shoulders. “The irony is that Atlantic rushed us into the studio, intending to have an album out fast. But if they’d given us breathing space, then they’d have gotten a much better album and released it about the same time as this was finally put out. And the cost would have been so much smaller.”

Yes’ 12th album, titled *Big Generator* (Squire: “It seemed to sum up that we wanted this to hit everyone with a powerhouse sound”) was released in September 1987. While people may have been hoping for another *90215*, what they got was a heavier yet still a contemporary, streamlined approach.

The quality of the songs was unquestionable, with *Shoot High, Aim Low, Rhythm Of Love* and *Love Will Find A Way* having a melodic class the equal of anything from the previous album, and proving Yes were moving forward rather than treading water. And despite the trails surrounding it, the album’s production definitely packed a welcome punch.

But it didn’t match the commercial success of its predecessor. In America, it peaked at No.15, selling a million copies – impressive, but well below its predecessor’s three million. In Britain it reached No.17, only one place lower than *90125*, but it failed to even make Silver status (60,000 copies). Four singles were put out from the album, but none were big hits. As if to reflect dwindling interest, the subsequent tour amounted to just 67 showsspread across five months - a far cry from the touring juggernaut the band had once been.

Almost inevitably, Rabin views the album as something of a disappointment. “I love the fact that through *90125* we were able to bring Yes into a fresh era and to prove to everyone that the band were not living in the past,” he says. “But for me *Big Generator* didn’t match it. There are a few songs like *Love Will Find A Way* and *Rhythm Of Love* which do work very well. But you cannot play the album from start to finish and believe it’s satisfying.”

Big Generator marked the end of this incarnation of Yes, at least in this form. Within two years, the line-up had been gene-spliced with an earlier version of the band to produce an ungainly, Frankenstein’s Monster of a band, resulting in the less-than-satisfactory *Union* album. More than two decades on, at least one member of the Squire/Anderson/Rabin/White/Kaye line-up looked back on *Big Generator* with fondess.

“It stands up really well,” Chris Squire told *Prog* in 2010. “The songs are strong and I regard it as a worthy follow up to *90125*. The problem was that the latter was so successful, whatever we’d done next would have disappointed some people. However, it’s an album I’m fond of.” ⓟ

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Birthright

The late 80s were not a high point for the progressive genre. But as the decade came to an end, the seeds were being sown for a new/old band to make some waves. In 2019, on the 30th anniversary of **ABWH**'s sole album, *Prog* looked back at their brief yet impactful journey…

Words: Johnny Sharp
Image: Roger Dean

1988 wasn't a vintage year for prog. In fact, at times it seemed as if the genre as we knew it was all but extinct, or at least in very poor health. The genre's original leading lights certainly didn't seem to be able or willing to arrest its decline. ELP were long gone, King Crimson were on indefinite hiatus. Genesis had never been more successful, yet at the same time never further away from their progressive roots as their polished pop rock formula continued to reap chart rewards. Pink Floyd still seemed to be approximating former glories but without Roger Waters, their intellectual, if not creative driving force, and with a slick, somewhat soulless feel to their new output. And Yes? Their early 80s reinvention as a synth-based prog pop outfit seemed to be running out of steam on 1987's *Big Generator,* and frontman Jon Anderson, disillusioned at the drift from their original artistic philosophy, jumped ship, leaving only Chris Squire from the founding line-up. With their record deal up for renewal, they faced an uncertain future.

> "It was a good time to get back to the roots that I'd started in the 70s…"
> **Jon Anderson**

Meanwhile, the neo-prog movement that had promised so much a few years earlier was stalling badly, as a swathe of bands signed up by major labels in the wake of Marillion's success in the early 80s found themselves forced into creative compromise before their deals dissolved in frustration and disillusionment. IQ, Pallas, Pendragon,

Roger Dean's Blue Desert artwork for the ABWH album. (Just don't tell the Yes guys…)

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Twelfth Night — none have happy memories of that time.

The neo-prog movement's most commercially and creatively potent representatives, Marillion, were facing their own crisis of identity as the face of the band, Fish, announced his departure that year. The band would continue with Steve Hogarth and reinvent themselves effectively, but something of their old prog identity was inevitably left behind with the classic line-up.

It was around this time that Jon Anderson, the piercing tenor and cosmic poet who'd always be the voice of Yes, also came to feel that the creative force of which he had long been figurehead needed to get back to its creative roots.

Many fans agreed. The oft-remixed *Rhythm Of Love* from that era, for example, may have grown to be a semi-regular staple of Yes/ARW sets in the years that followed, but at the time, the idea of a dance remix of a Yes track was like putting a hairy biker in a boob tube.

That was perhaps symptomatic of a broader malaise that had also spread as the 80s wore on. Prog artists were aware of how squarely at odds with musical trends their chosen style was, and with rock bands achieving great success with a more polished, radio-friendly sound and an airbrushed image, there was increasing pressure within the industry to tailor artists' sounds to that template.

After all, if you weren't on MTV or the radio, you might as well not exist. Although independent labels promising artistic independence (if not chart success) had gained some traction during the decade since punk, they'd had less impact in rock and progressive circles. Within the industry it was still considered indisputable that in order to have any kind of success you had to tailor your sound to what was on the radio and MTV at that time, with shiny production makeovers, radio edits, 12-inch and 'club' remixes the order of the day. And many years before the internet, crowdfunding and social media offered alternative routes to marketing your music on your own terms, major label deals were the only realistic game in town, particularly for bands like Yes who were used to a certain profile and budget for their work. Those who paid the piper called the tune, meaning labels, management and agents reserved the right to force the artist's hand and push through the kind of compromises that would seem counter-productive today.

When you look at pictures of Marillion from the mid-80s and they're wearing lipgloss and shiny suits with the sleeves rolled up, you're bound to wonder if this is what they had in mind for themselves when they first stepped on stage at Aylesbury Friars.

This conflict between progressive instincts and commercial forces was evidently a factor in Jon Anderson's departure from Yes. His exit was confirmed after the singer had completed his touring commitments following *Big Generator* in May 1988, and later, in the tour programme for ABWH, he would explain how a European break soon afterwards helped him formulate a new plan.

The story went that Anderson spent some time in Greece the following summer, where he'd often travelled and worked with Vangelis among others.

"I'd recorded three albums there," he explained, "and discovered things that altered my perception of the world we live in." He was in Hydra, an island long popular as a retreat for artistic folk, when he came to the conclusion he hadn't been true to himself, had been spending too much time in LA, and it might be "a good time to get back to the roots that I'd started in the 70s…"

In other accounts he made a quite simple explanation for why he wanted out of Yes: "It was purely down to not having fun. I will never hang around just for the bread, and I will never hang around just for old times' sake."

And it seems fair to assume he was already planning his next move as the last Yes dates drew to a close.

Another key factor in his leaving the band for the second time in a decade was perhaps the feeling that he was losing creative grip on the band for whom he'd once been the driving force.

"I like having Lead Singer's Disease," he explained after he left. "I have to let the others know I'm listening. Yes were making me feel like a sideman and I'll never be a sideman for anyone. I love Chris and I'll work with him again, but for years he's been late for everything. Rehearsals starting at two, he'd never be there 'til five. It was driving everyone crazy. So I rang him and he said, 'This is divorce, then?' And I said, 'It's got to be. Christ, you're just not handling your friends very well, are you?'"

Nonetheless, Anderson once again hinted that he was keeping that door slightly ajar: "that's not to say I'd never work with them again — I have a respect for everyone that's been in the group."

So was this really "divorce"? Or just a trial separation? Perhaps the signs of eventual reunion with what would soon become known as Yes-West were always there. But for now, hope sprang eternal for a brave new quartet, with a new name and ambitious new music, which promised to give prog a much-needed shot in the arm. Ⓟ

ABWH, L-R: Jon Anderson, Rick Wakeman, Bill Bruford, Steve Howe. (So technically AWBH in this pic…)

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

We Make Believe

From volcanos to *that* lawsuit, **Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman and Howe** remember the making and aftermath of their 1989 self-titled debut.

Words: Johnny Sharp

In any divorce, of course, those involved are bound to wonder if there was anyone else influencing the split. And when *Prog* speaks to Steve Howe, he's unwilling (or possibly unable – can you put an exact date to everything you were doing 30 years ago?) to put a strict timeline on when he first got the call from his former bandmate.

"Jon [Anderson] called and asked, 'Have you got any songs?' Well, as it happened I had six songs, on cassette. So he came round – I hadn't seen Jon for years, you know, but we just kind of connected. And obviously the fact he came to me made me think – rightly so – that he wasn't enjoying work he was doing with other guys, that was the way it was heading."

> "I just got in touch with each guy and said, 'Can I come over, say hello and we'll talk about music?'"
> **Jon Anderson**

"I'm not sure," Anderson tells *Prog* over the phone from California when we ask about exactly when *Big Generator*-era Yes ended and ABWH began. "I just know that at that time I wanted to make new music. I have ideas all the time and it just happened I bumped into somebody that managed that situation and I just got in touch with each guy and said, 'Can I come over, say hello and we'll talk about music?' The idea was just do something you feel good about – the kind of Yes that you think it should be. That kind of thing."

The timing was pretty good, because just as Anderson was newly free of pressing professional commitments, Howe and Wakeman didn't have any obvious reason to resist a high-profile new project.

Howe's GTR project with Steve Hackett had lost momentum after the latter left, while Wakeman, who had departed Yes along with Anderson at the turn of the 80s, was busy enough producing Christian-themed ambient albums such as 1986's *Country Airs* and 1987's *The Family Album* and *The Gospels*, but inevitably they ended up rather ghettoised within the genres of 'New Age' and religious music.

Bill Bruford had begun the 80s back in the King Crimson fold but had become increasingly interested in improvisational jazz-oriented sounds augmented by emerging electronic technology. After touring small clubs with his new quartet, Earthworks, it's understandable that he'd be open to trying something a little higher profile that could help finance smaller passion projects like Earthworks while also offering the prospect of doing something artistically worthwhile.

And for a while, it all seemed to come together very nicely indeed…

"We seized the opportunity," says Howe of his initial studio sessions with Anderson at La Frette studios in Paris, "and started dreaming [the songs] up with Matt Clifford [session keyboard player now in The Rolling Stones], and got them going as tracks."

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> “We never wanted to call ourselves Yes at all. But we were going to play Yes songs.”
> **Rick Wakeman**

Howe refers darkly to “someone I’d rather leave out of this” as the figure who Anderson says “managed the situation”, and this was evidently erstwhile Yes, GTR and Rick Wakeman manager Brian Lane.

Indeed, it was Lane who made the first phone call to Wakeman to request his participation.

“I’d just moved to the Isle of Man, and he called me out of the blue,” says Wakeman. “He said, ‘How’d you fancy playing some Yes music again, along with some new music and new ideas?’

“I said, ‘Uh, that sounds interesting,’ but I thought the whole Yes situation in America was a bit of a mess. I didn’t know but I’d heard there were all sorts of disagreements and arguments going on.

“Brian said, ‘Well, is that any different to Yes since day one?’

“I said no, and he said, ‘Jon wants to get back to… not the old style Yes as such, but the old principles of what Yes was. He wants to put as much of the original band back together as possible.’ So I said, ‘Count me in!’”

Rick Wakeman says the guys’ “inspirational filing cabinet” was filling up, working in such a stunning setting.

Soon afterwards, Lane would secure a record deal with Arista’s Clive Davis and arrange a tour. It all happened so fast, in fact, that it wasn’t immediately possible to get all the quartet working on material straight away.

Wakeman subsequently joined Howe and Anderson for some of the initial sessions in Paris, but the singer had a plan to relieve them of some of the more workaday aspects of creating an album. “His plan,” says Wakeman, “was not a bad idea at all: because this had happened a bit out of the blue and we all had commitments, he would get other musicians to put the basic bits and pieces down — the mundane stuff — then we could come in and add the creative stuff.”

Bill Bruford was also amenable to this idea, impressed by the standard of material presented to him, and hardly averse to the idea of going to the Caribbean to record at George Martin’s AIR studios.

“Jon had been fermenting the block of music we ended up recording for many months, years even,” reckons Bruford. “I’d been away in another world of Earthworks and was totally out of touch with the Yes behemoth. But here was fresh music, well-presented in high quality, great-sounding demos, and I didn’t have to sit around in a rehearsal room for months deciding on the sandwich order. All I had to do was turn up in what sounded like an agreeable place, maybe with a cricket bat, and sprinkle some personalised fairy dust on the tracks… and job done.”

Nonetheless, Bruford says he didn’t realise it would be a reunion of four members of the early Yes line-ups until very late in the day.

“When did I realise it would be more than just working on a solo record with Jon?” he asks rhetorically. “At the airport! I’d obviously misunderstood from Jon’s brief visit to my house. It had been a while since we had even spoken, let alone played together, so I didn’t think to ask who else was

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

UPDATE 2019

JON ANDERSON

PRESS

Our focus on ABWH turns out to be timely for Jon Anderson for more reasons than the 30-year anniversary. As we speak, he is about to release a new solo album, *1000 Hands: Chapter One,* drawn from song ideas old and new, including long-lost demos he recently retrieved from storage, recorded at Big Bear studios in Florida, which he dates back to January 1991. Alan White and the late Chris Squire play on them, and that would have been just around the time ABWH had newly reunited with their old Yes colleagues, and found themselves at a creative crossroads. Could this mean we get a glimpse of one of the roads not taken before *Union* proved such a disappointment? Anderson isn't sure, and doesn't seem to recall any connection between his work back then and the ABWH/Yes album that was also in gestation. He also says he went on tour with Kitaro soon after the demos were made, which would instead date their recording to the spring of 1992. Hmmm.

Whatever the true timeline, though, the new album also promises more recent contributions from notable names including Steve Howe, Ian Anderson, Billy Cobham, Chick Corea and many, many more – hence the title.

Chapter Two is due to follow later this year or early next, with a couple more rescued nuggets from that Big Bear session. Some guitar licks from Howe are also on the album, but Anderson's closest encounter with his ABWH muckers in recent times has been the tour with ARW. Can he see himself working as part of the official Yes line-up again?

"Hard to say. I would like to. I keep thinking there's a time to be able to do that, it's just a question of everybody being available and wanting to do it. So we'll see. You never know." But if it were to happen, let's maybe avoid calling it 'Re-Union', eh?

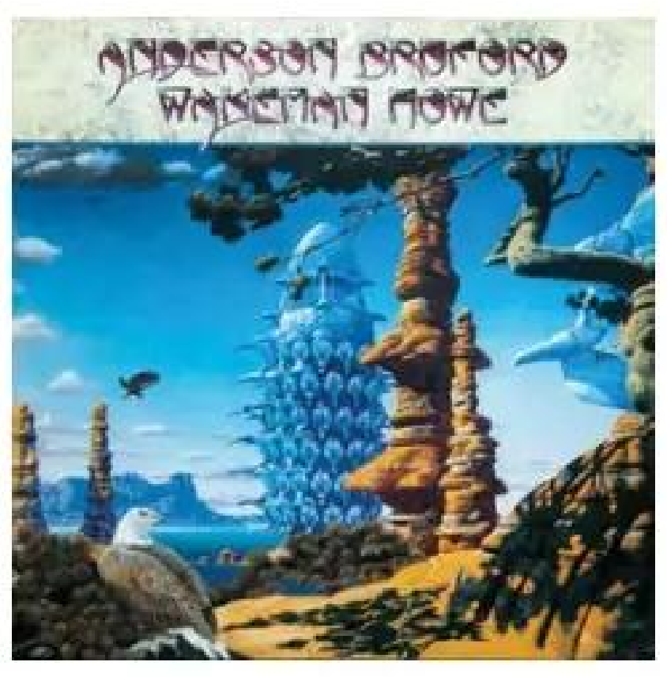
Head to www.jonanderson.com for more information. **JS**

Jon Anderson loved working in the Caribbean, away from the music business.

going to be on the sessions. So there at the airport were Rick, Steve and Brian Lane. It was sort of, 'Hello, are you going where I'm going?!' I thought Jon had 'left Yes', but you'll forgive me if I'd not been keeping up."

His memory for every detail doesn't seem entirely reliable here, as by all other accounts Steve Howe elected not to join them in Montserrat, instead contributing his guitar parts at AIR studios in London. "He doesn't like the Caribbean," Anderson comments. "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink."

It's Yes, Jim, but not as we know it.



Howe, meanwhile, claims he opted to stay home to spend more time with his instruments:

"I didn't want to ship lots of guitars over there then try and work my studio approach there. I wanted to have my collection available. That was the start of the age when you didn't have to all sit in the same room to make a record, and it was a nice opportunity to know what had been done and hear the arrangements, then come along after they had been constructed."

A key element that was now required was a bass player, and Bruford immediately nominated his King Crimson bandmate Tony Levin. The line-up was complete, and Howe's absence notwithstanding, the setting for the creation of ABWH's only album would turn out to be an inspired one, not least because it removed them physically and for the most part creatively from the industry.

"You don't have any talking to record companies and people snooping around at what you're doing," says Anderson, "and it was very wonderful to be isolated from the business and again from the world in terms of recording. That was the joy of making that album."

"We wanted to be so far away, with clear heads nothing else to worry about but the album," says Wakeman. "Steve in the end recorded his bits in London, which was a shame because there's no

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doubt about it, it was very inspirational to work and write down there."

The band and crew shared a love of cricket with their hosts, which led to a memorable engagement with the locals, which Anderson, Wakeman and Bruford all recall with a mixture of fondness and mild embarrassment.

"They were nuts about cricket," Wakeman explains, "and we decided to have a match against the locals. We played the local kids and thought, well we're much older, we'll sort them out! And they slaughtered us! All the town came out to watch and it was a great, fun event."

Below: Howe, Bruford and Anderson at a press conference in London, 1989.

GEORGE CHIN / ICONICPIX

"A tragi-comedy of epic proportions," Bruford calls it. "We all hoped our leader would show the same confidence at the crease as he did when directing the drummer in the studio, but, alas, it was not to be. The drummer also only lasted about two balls, to a roar of approval from the locals. We were soundly thrashed by what looked like the local Under-13s. There is humiliating video of this somewhere."

"We played against the local schools," says Anderson. "And they killed us, twice! So after that we said, 'No more!' But it was a wonderful feeling to play with these kids and meet their families and the people of the island."

"We really did integrate," says Wakeman. "The people were so wonderful, they really made us welcome. Jon and I would go for walks late at night and we did lots of sightseeing. We got involved in the island in many ways — we even went to Pentecostal gospel church with all the gospel singing, backed by this soul band who were just fantastic. It really put you in the mood to want to play and want to work."

One of the standout tracks of the album is *The Meeting*, an airy, spiritual ballad built around some beautiful cascades of piano from Wakeman and lyrical sentiments of religious or romantic devotion — depending on your interpretation. *'Surely I could tell / If you ask me Lord to board the train/My life, my love would be the same/Yes, I would be the one for you in the meeting of your love.'*

It sounds like what it is: a song written by two men riding on something of a natural high.

"Jon and I wrote *The Meeting* at two in the morning," Wakeman recalls. "We'd been out walking and talking about music and we came back and Jon had an idea."

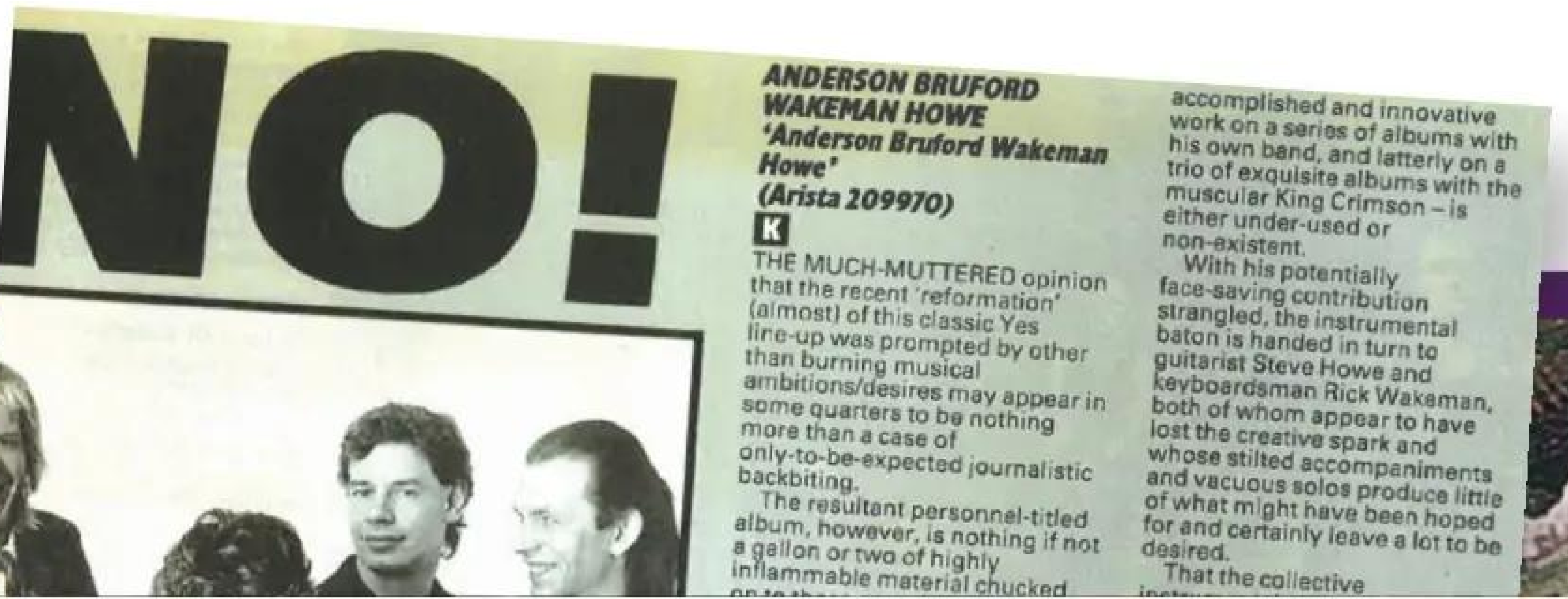
"We set the tape rolling and hey presto, we had the song," says Anderson.

"He said, 'Let's just go in the studio see what happens,'" says Wakeman. "'You play, I'll sing.' So we recorded it, and came in the morning and everyone said, 'That's fantastic!'"

It wasn't all blissful harmony, though, and the album might have turned out a little differently if certain events had gone another way and if those band members familiar with Anderson's strident leadership style hadn't had the chance to pacify the newcomers.

"We'd been sent high-quality demos of the tracks we were expected to replace and improve on," says Bruford, "so Tony and I were well-prepared, ready to play. We knew our stuff. When we first gathered at the dining table at Air Montserrat, Jon must have had a bad travel day, because he began to round on Levin whom he barely knew — in fact may never have met — accusing him aggressively of not being *ready*. Big mistake. I had to persuade one of the world's most experienced bass players — a man who can play *anything* now — to stay, in a hurried damage-limitation exercise. He was ready to walk."

It wasn't universally loved, it seems... *Kerrang!*'s review of the album.



NO!

ANDERSON BRUFORD WAKEMAN HOWE
'Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe'
(Arista 209970)
K

THE MUCH-MUTTERED opinion that the recent 'reformation' (almost) of this classic Yes line-up was prompted by other than burning musical ambitions/desires may appear in some quarters to be nothing more than a case of only-to-be-expected journalistic backbiting.

The resultant personnel-titled album, however, is nothing if not a gallon or two of highly inflammable material chucked

accomplished and innovative work on a series of albums with his own band, and latterly on a trio of exquisite albums with the muscular King Crimson – is either under-used or non-existent.

With his potentially face-saving contribution strangled, the instrumental baton is handed in turn to guitarist Steve Howe and keyboardsman Rick Wakeman, both of whom appear to have lost the creative spark and whose stilted accompaniments and vacuous solos produce little of what might have been hoped for and certainly leave a lot to be desired.

That the collective

INSET CLIPPINGS: DAVID WATKINSON COLLECTION

What they also didn't know — and nor, it seems, did anyone else on the island — was that the island's volcanic Soufrière hills, were not in fact dormant and the volcano would soon wreak havoc of catastrophic proportions, as it did after erupting in July 1995.

"Nobody had any idea there was any danger," says Wakeman. "I climbed up cotton fields up the side of the mountain, quite a long way up. That was one of my fun things to do there, because the views were astonishing."

Disasters averted for now, the central vision for the album was clearly Jon Anderson's, and the lyrics on Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe adopt a clearer style than the beguiling webs of words we were used to from early Yes albums. The opening salvoes on *Themes*, for instance, seemed to take aim at industry forces that would try to mould Yes' sound and curb their creativity: *'Be gone, you ever-piercing power play machine,'* he sings, *'cutting our musical solidarity... For too long I have danced to your destiny/no longer fill my head with empty dreams/of reality and gold/your reality.'*

"It was becoming too obvious that record companies were just there for making money," says Anderson. "They pretend to really understand what you're trying to do, but if you don't have the song that's going to get on the radio they drop you. It's business and there's nothing wrong in that, but after a while you just want to have a clear and honest relationship with anyone you work with."

Another key lyrical theme on the album was the need to get back in touch with native and aboriginal cultures, and make amends for the wrongs that modern governments and cultures had done them. It's a sentiment that Anderson believes is even more relevant 30 years on.

'They were blasted by the silver cloud,' he sings on *Birthright*, adding, *'This place ain't big enough for stars and stripes/ Counting out the statesmen, bungling one by one, spelling out this segregation.'*

So there we have reference to post-war nuclear testing in the Pacific, people being alienated from each other in the name of a national flag, and politicians doing their worst to enforce such divisions.

"The point was that we are all indigenous people from way, way back — *Game Of Thrones*! So why separate other indigenous peoples? Because historically we've thought they had nothing to offer us. And now in recent

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Bill Bruford had to persuade Levin to stay.

UPDATE 2019

BILL BRUFORD

FUTURE

The ever-erudite drummer announced his retirement from professional performance in 2009, and nearly a decade on, he has no regrets.

"I've done my fair bit of touring," he says. "41 years, give or take – and I have less than zero interest in doing all that again. Last time I looked, retired meant, well, retired."

However, he hasn't been idly twiddling those impeccably nimble thumbs in the meantime.

"I like to contribute," he says, and as we'll later discover, he's not above writing the odd bit of music for famous friends, "but I retired 10 years ago and acquired a doctorate in musicology. I'm now an author working mostly in music-related academia."

His latest book, *Uncharted: Creativity And The Expert Drummer,* is published by the University of Michigan Press. "I can be more useful now with a pen than a pair of drumsticks," he says. "I'm more interested in the psychology and behaviours of the musician than developments in the music itself."

Nonetheless, he retains an interest in the business due to helping run his labels Summerfold and Winterfold, which oversee reissues and new editions of his back catalogue. The latest is *Sheer Reckless Abandon*, a four-CD collection of his work with Michiel Borstlap, and in June he plans to release a box set of his jazz group Earthworks' entire back catalogue dating back to their 1987 debut.

"Once in the music business you can never leave," he reasons. A sentiment his former ABWH colleagues would surely echo.

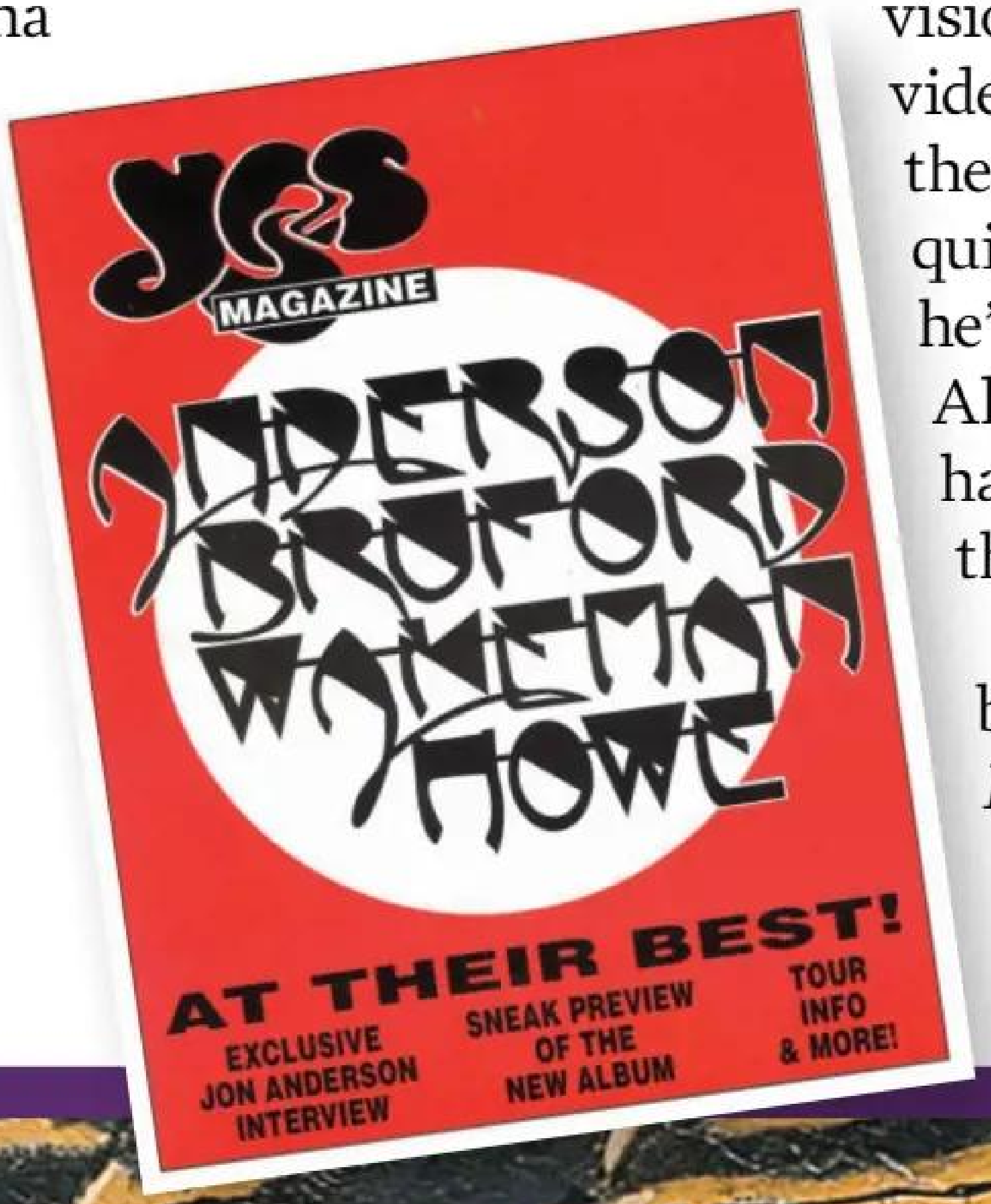
Head to www.billbruford.com for more information. **JS**

years there's been more awareness about this. In Canada a few years ago, the parliament asked for forgiveness to the Navajo people, saying how sorry they were to have done what they did. The same happened in Australia a couple of years earlier — it's gonna happen all over the world, and that's what the song's about. And the nuclear tests were a terrible moment in British history, they'd check out atom bombs without seeing if everyone was out of the way! Awful!"

Anderson was also the chief visionary on the musical front, holding the metaphorical conductor's baton in the studio. Indeed, Bruford's comments about "directing the drummer" reflect the ongoing frustration Yes members had perennially felt about the singer's determinedly hands-on approach to conducting the grand orchestral visions (during the same promotional video, *The Big Dream*, that features the cricket match, Wakeman is seen quipping to camera, "I wonder what he's going to let me play today."). All the same, the key players clearly had no shortage of chances to flex their creative muscles.

You hear that in Wakeman's breathtaking synth fanfares on *Fist Of Fire*, Howe's evocative acoustic guitar patterns on *Quartet* and *Let's Pretend* and in Levin's spidery bass runs, which don't attempt to ape Chris Squire's trademark Rickenbacker rumble, but which add their own lively undercurrent to proceedings. And Anderson earns his corn as captain of the ship: those enduringly bright vocal melodies are in as good a shape as they have been for years, even without Squire's harmonic counterpoint.

When it all comes together it's dizzyingly effective. The final section of *Themes* offers shape-shifting rhythms, freewheeling guitar and typically baroque synth flourishes. And even if Bill Bruford's electronic drums sometimes sound sonically anachronistic and a little tinny, his rhythms are intricate and incredible, particularly when adding subtle ethnic flavours and atmospheric percussive



YES MAGAZINE

ANDERSON BRUFORD WAKEMAN HOWE

AT THEIR BEST!

EXCLUSIVE JON ANDERSON INTERVIEW

SNEAK PREVIEW OF THE NEW ALBUM

TOUR INFO & MORE!

Yes magazine approves of the breakaway.

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frills to tracks such as *Birthright* and *Brother Of Mine*.

Not that the drummer has always sounded that impressed with his work on this record. In fact, if you took some of his later comments at face value you might imagine that in the words of *Withnail & I*, he'd "come on holiday by mistake".

"You get paid tons there," he said in one interview not long afterwards, as if talking about an office where he sometimes does a week or two's shifts as an IT consultant. "Much too much, and it's great. There's no musical future in it… it's regressive music, it's historical stuff. But once in a while I think a musician is allowed to go on vacation and make everyone very happy playing all the stuff they all want them to play from 20 years ago."

Fair comment in some ways – Bruford has always been a devotee of progressive music in the purest sense, determined to push the art form forwards, not fall back on the familiar. And ABWH were one of the first bands to trade on a certain amount of nostalgia for a classic band's line-up in reforming to get back to a well-loved sound, an approach that is now the chief source of revenue for seasoned bands advertising live renditions of classic albums in full. So can we say ABWH were pioneers of heritage rock? For all his self-effacing comments at the time, Bruford thinks not.

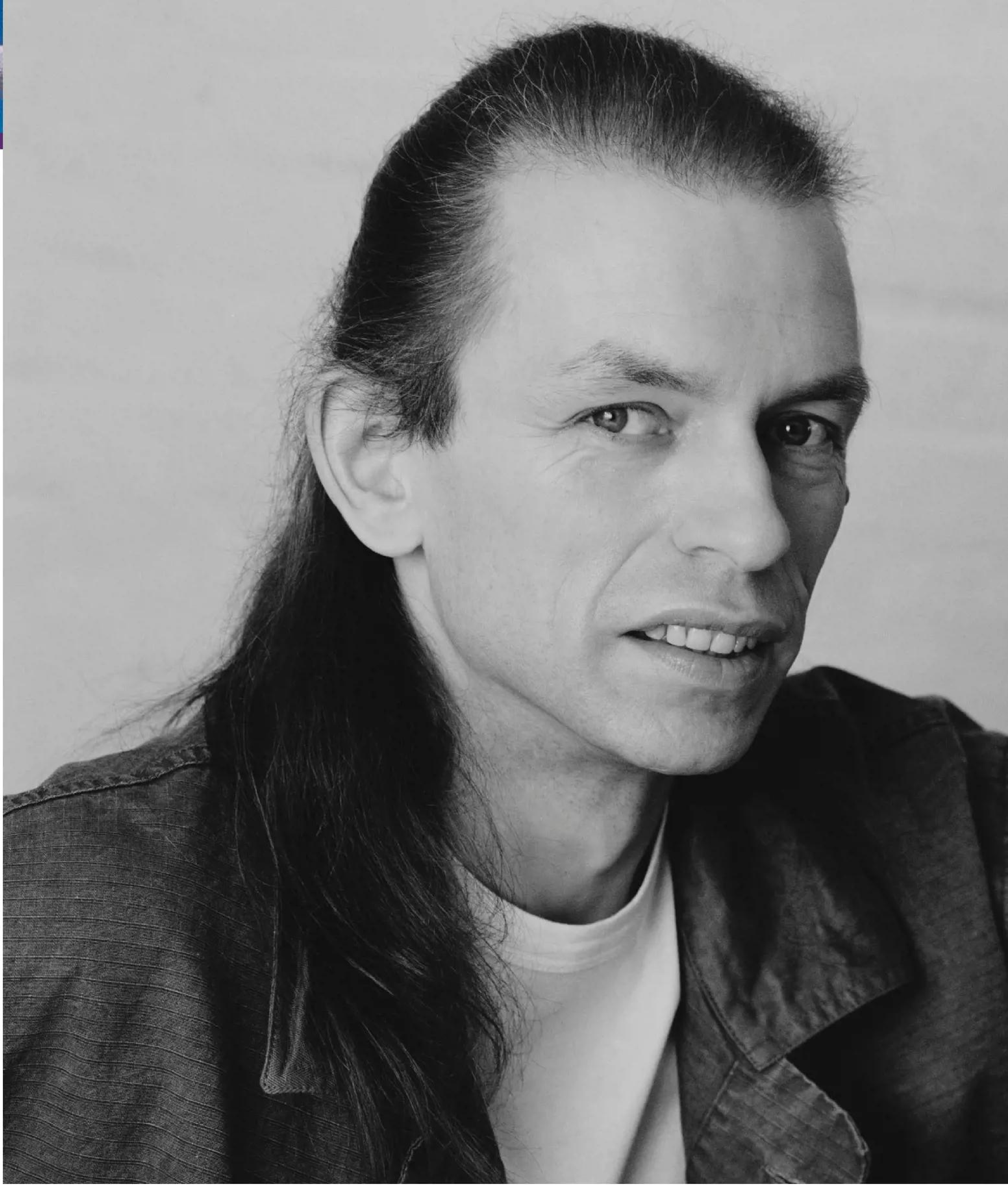
"My interest in ABWH was in so far as I might be able to help move that sort of music forward a bit faster. I've been rude about geriatric rock in the past and see no reason to recant. Personally, I just wish the Rolling Stones would go away and let someone else have a go. No, I don't think ABWH started all that heritage business – for our brief period in the sunshine we were trying to push it forward."

That they did, for much of the album. And Bruford's bandmates feel he was a very important inventive force.

"As we talked the ideas through, Bill embellished our musical thoughts via his new, computerised kit," said Anderson at the time. "The sounds were amazing.

"Bill really underplays his role," he says. "Bill was pivotal. Some of the underlying themes are brought to life by him, so rhythmically and percussion-wise his work is desperately important."

And now Bruford insists he did indeed feel that this project had potential. "Somewhere around *Birthright* and *Brother Of Mine* it seemed that a window opened briefly into a genuinely interesting new musical place for us," he says, "distinct from the mothership Yes. If we had the strength and determination, I reckoned, based on those tracks, that this thing Jon had started could have fresh legs and a committed future built on sound musical choices. For the next few months, we had the wind in our sails and there was a fertile and confident feeling about the thing."


MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Steve Howe elected to stay home with his instruments rather than head to the Caribbean.

> "*Teakbois*, I don't think anyone understood but Jon."
> **Steve Howe**

Too much confidence, some listeners might argue. That might explain the bold inclusion of the tropically infused dance number *Teakbois*, which was not short on intricate rhythms, but wasn't to everyone's taste.

"*Teakbois,* I don't think anyone understood but Jon," says Steve Howe drily.

Unlike today when music fans' tastes tend to be much more diverse, in the late 80s it was fair to say that the subset containing lovers of both Caribbean party music and prog rock was a small one. Nonetheless, when you listen back now it's a mightily infectious earworm, one that Wakeman puts down to their environment.

"Like it or not, you can't help being influenced by where you are – your inspirational filing cabinet will fill up, almost without you realising."

All told, though, the quartet had made a very fine record that largely achieved what they set out to: updating Yes' vintage progressive approach to album creation with new influences and modern technology thrown into the mix.

Spirits could hardly have been higher as the band went public with the new project and announced a string of US dates to promote the album, promising "An Evening Of Yes Music Plus".

But trouble lay ahead.

ABWH may have offered Yes music played by former Yes members, but the band Anderson had left a year previously weren't about to let that happen without a fight. Although currently without a record deal and seemingly with no concrete plans to do much in the near-future, Yes continued under the stewardship of Chris Squire and Alan White, with the radio-friendly songwriting of Trevor Rabin as their chief commercial weapon. In May 1989, Billboard reported that Tony Kaye, Rabin, Squire and White had filed suit in the California US District court to prevent ABWH mentioning Yes at all in their promotional activities or interviews. At which point, the irony of the ABWH name's similarity to a legal firm seemed all the more striking.

The argument centred around an agreement signed by past and present members in 1984 agreeing that only those who remained in the band had the right to use the name Yes. On that basis, the argument went that if ABWH mentioned Yes in their billing or publicity they would be removing earning power from the LA-based band who were still rightly (in the eyes of the law) plying their trade under that globally recognised brand name. For a while, it was all somewhat unsettling for the new quartet, who feared they might be on something of a sticky wicket when they came to play live.

Anderson admitted at the time, "We can't lie to the audience [in terms of publicising the shows]. A lot of it will be Yes music. It's a funny thing. If we say we're not going to play Yes music, there's a possibility a lot of fans wouldn't come to see us. But if we say we're going to play some Yes music, there's a possibility we're going to get in a little trouble."

Not that the band ever wanted to pass themselves off as Yes in all but name, they insist.

"We never wanted to call ourselves Yes at all," says Wakeman. "But we were going to play Yes songs, and of course all over the venues people would be holding up banners saying, 'ABWH = Yes' – were they going to be sued, too?

EBET ROBERTS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

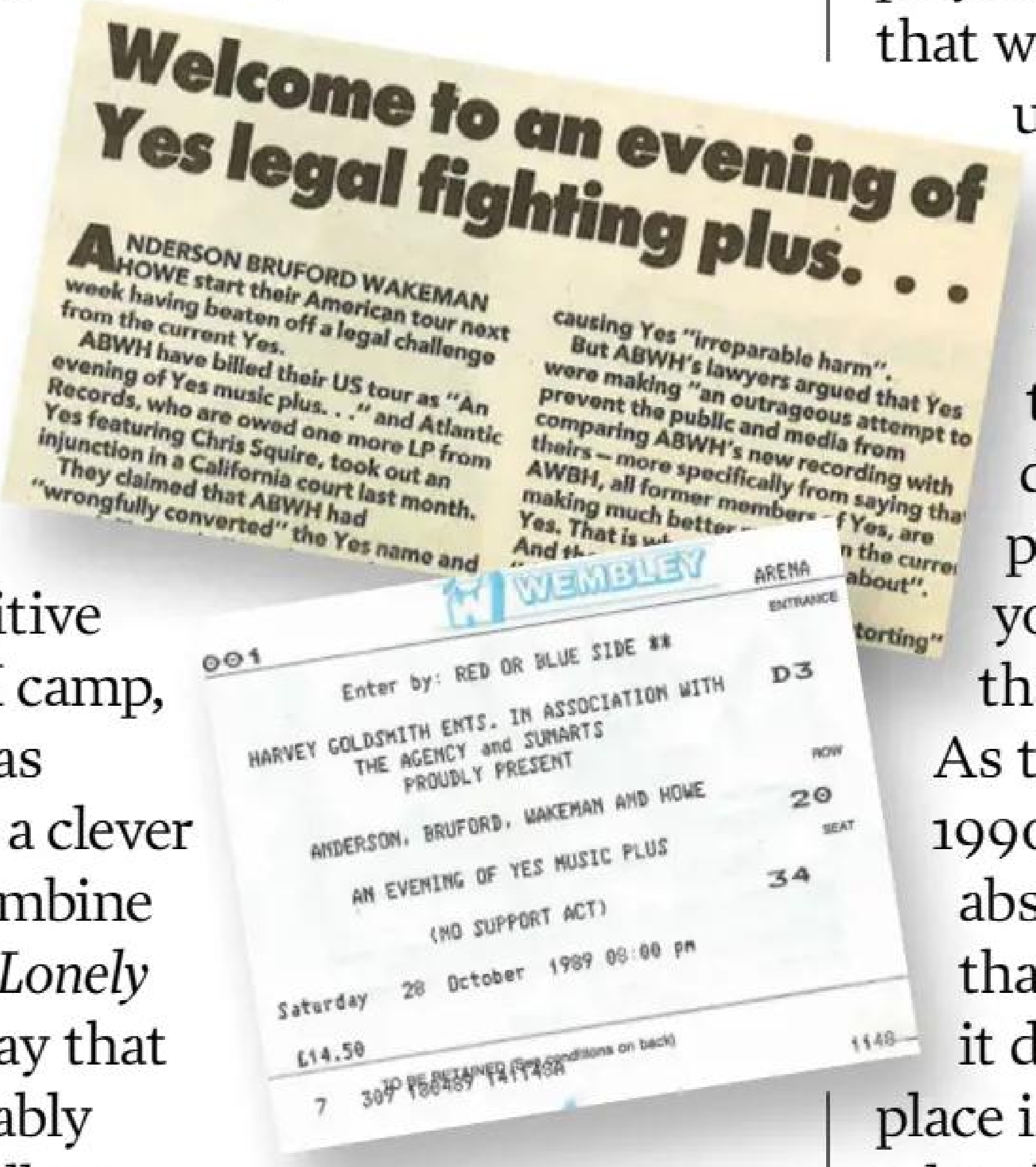
Bill Bruford, Julian Colbeck, Milton McDonald, Jon Anderson, Steve Howe and Tony Levin onstage.

"It was ridiculous. I think the case lasted 10 seconds because the judge said, 'Hold on, you're trying to stop four guys, who were in the band that wrote and played the original music, playing what they wrote and played?' So it was thrown out."

The album, cheekily catalogued 90126 by Arista and replete with classically Yes-style Roger Dean sleeve and logo (thankfully Dean didn't find a legal writ landing on his studio doormat for approximating his iconic work with the other bunch) would sell 750,000 copies worldwide, and the sold-out tour that followed saw Yes fans gleefully buy into the positive vibes exuding from the ABWH camp, lawsuits be damned. The set was heavy on Yes classics, although a clever opening medley managed to combine *Time And A Word, Owner Of A Lonely Heart* and *Teakbois* in such a way that made the latter make considerably more sense than it did on the album. Above all, though, the feeling you get from watching the film of the San Francisco date on the tour, *An Evening of Yes Music Plus*, is one of a euphoric gathering of the Yes clans, as Anderson holds court, Christlike, walking through the crowds bathed in white spotlight, to open the show.

"It was very special," says Wakeman. "The audience in various forms has always had very dedicated elements. But this was on another planet. You could feel it before you even got on stage. I've never ever experienced anything quite like that. It lifted everybody. It was really quite amazing."

Even the departure of Tony Levin from the tour after he fell seriously ill with hepatitis couldn't derail things.



Welcome to an evening of Yes legal fighting plus. . .

ANDERSON BRUFORD WAKEMAN HOWE start their American tour next week having beaten off a legal challenge from the current Yes.

ABWH have billed their US tour as "An evening of Yes music plus. . ." and Atlantic Records, who are owed one more LP from Yes featuring Chris Squire, took out an injunction in a California court last month.

They claimed that ABWH had "wrongfully converted" the Yes name and

causing Yes "irreparable harm".

But ABWH's lawyers argued that Yes were making "an outrageous attempt to prevent the public and media from comparing ABWH's new recording with theirs – more specifically from saying tha AWBH, all former members of Yes, are making much better

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Calling the tour An Evening Of Yes Music Plus proved problematic for the guys.

INSET CLIPPINGS: DAVID WATKINSON COLLECTION

"It put us in a really difficult position," says Wakeman, "because obviously the music is not very easy for someone new to pick up. Tony suggested we get in Jeff Berlin, a very well-known American session player, and he literally sat down and in two days wrote down and learnt the exact parts Tony was playing. The only difficulty with that was for those shows the rest of us had to be strict in sticking to what we had rehearsed and not improvise too much. Suddenly we had to be incredibly strict to what we'd rehearsed. No disrespect to Jeff – a fine bass player and a lovely guy – but if you saw ABWH with Tony Levin, that was really *the* show."

As the tour drew to a close in March 1990, all seemed well, despite Levin's absence. And for the central quartet that made and toured the album, it definitely deserves a prominent place in the canon of Yes and Yes-related albums.

"I very much consider the ABWH album as a Yes album," says Wakeman. "even though it doesn't have the name Yes attached to it. It will always be part of me and my history with Yes, and I'm very proud of it."

"It came out of a collective feeling," says Jon Anderson: "Instead of chasing another hit record you just make good music, and that was what I wanted to do with ABWH, I wanna make the kind of music I want to make with the people I want to work with – and it actually became very successful, which I'm very happy about."

A few months later, work would begin on ABWH's second album. However, it didn't quite turn out as planned...

Yes, 1969 (*l-r*): Peter Banks, Bill Bruford, Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Tony Kaye.

LEFT: PRESS RIGHT: GETTY

Crimson Tides

In 2009, as **Bill Bruford** consigned his percussive toys to the box marked 'retired', we caught up with the only man to play for the 'holy trinity' of prog bands – **Yes**, **King Crimson** and **Genesis** – to hear the fascinating story he had to tell.

Words: **Paul Henderson**

Well, that's it. No more tour buses, no more soundchecks, no more set-lists to ponder, no more "Can I have a bit more vocals in my monitors please, John", no more studio tans. Having called time on his playing days and got himself a nice little office job, of sorts (see The Office boxout on p63), the only thing Bill Bruford's drumsticks are likely to be used for now is stirring tins of Dulux matt white when he finally gives the kitchen ceiling the lick of paint he's had to put on hold ("When I get back from the tour, darling. I promise this time") for the past however many years of his myriad musical pursuits.

Retired? Surely not? It's difficult to think of Bill Bruford having closed the door on his career as a musician, locked it behind him and dropped the key into an old trunk filled with memories and memorabilia collected during his more than 40 years of playing. But he has.

You could write a book about Bruford's highly achieving career as a musician (in fact he has done: the unfussily titled *Bill Bruford – The Autobiography*, reviewed last issue). There's certainly plenty of material to work with. Such as being on the forward deck with the rest of the original Yes when the good ship Progressive Rock first set sail to uncharted waters back in the late 60s – then escaping in a lifeboat just when the band were heading for the Land Of Legends. There are his stints in enduring prog chameleons King Crimson, including being there for the revered touchstone album *Red* in the 70s.

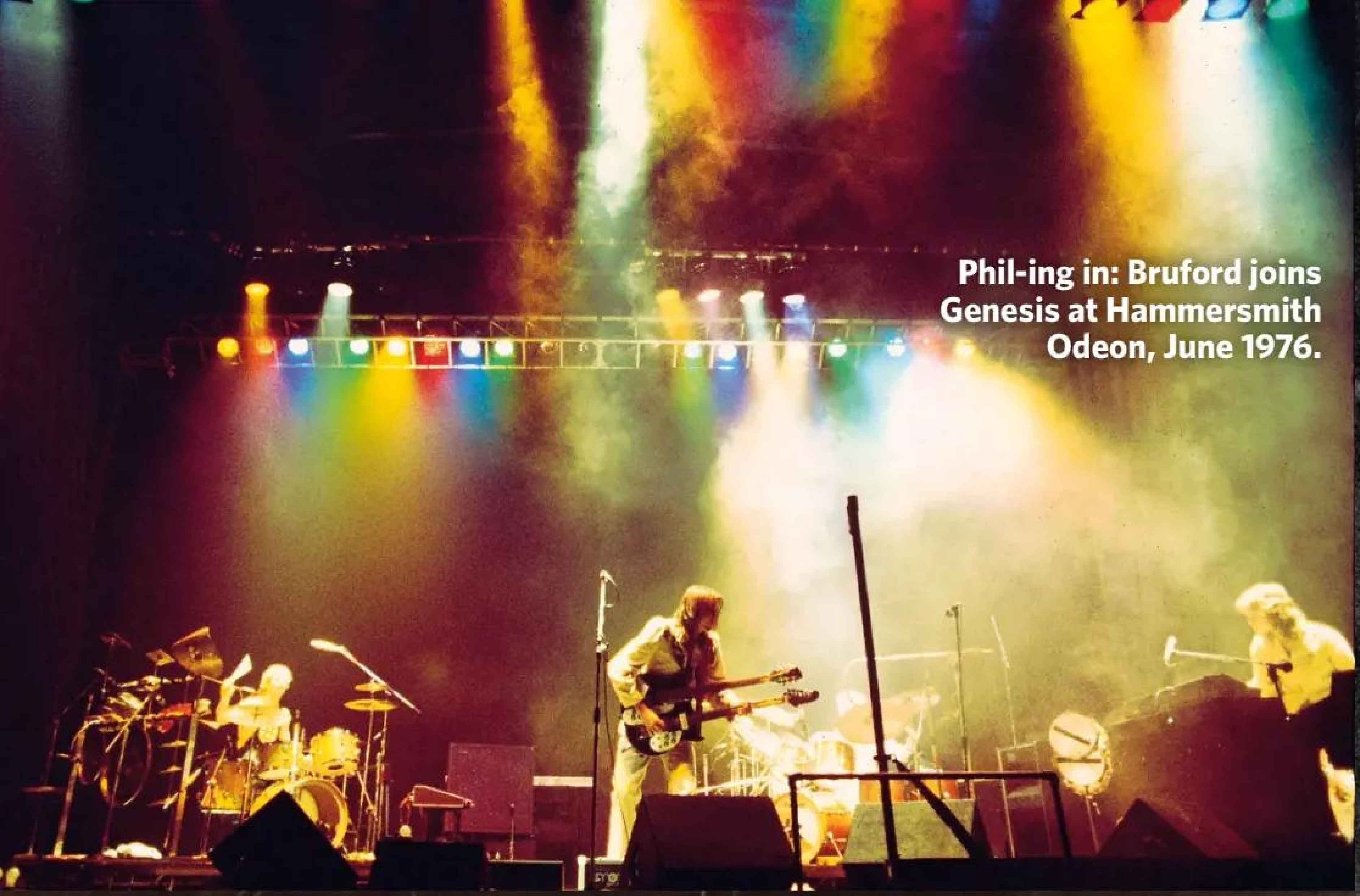
Less known than those two prog pillars was his remarkable band Bruford, blessed with extraordinary talent. There was the short-lived, now seemingly forgotten UK, which launched to a fanfare but then disappeared into a fog of unfulfilled potential. And, probably more fulfilling for Bruford himself, if existing in a somewhat different orbit to the rock world, have been his latter-day, final-chapter travels through the jazz world with, among others, Patrick Moraz and various incarnations of his band Earthworks.

It's certainly been quite a trip. All which brings him to: "Thank you and goodnight. You've been a lovely audience."

As well as rescuing him from unemployment, a hired-gun stint also put Bruford the unique position of having played with what many would see as the holy trinity of prog bands, certainly British ones. As well as Yes and Crimson,

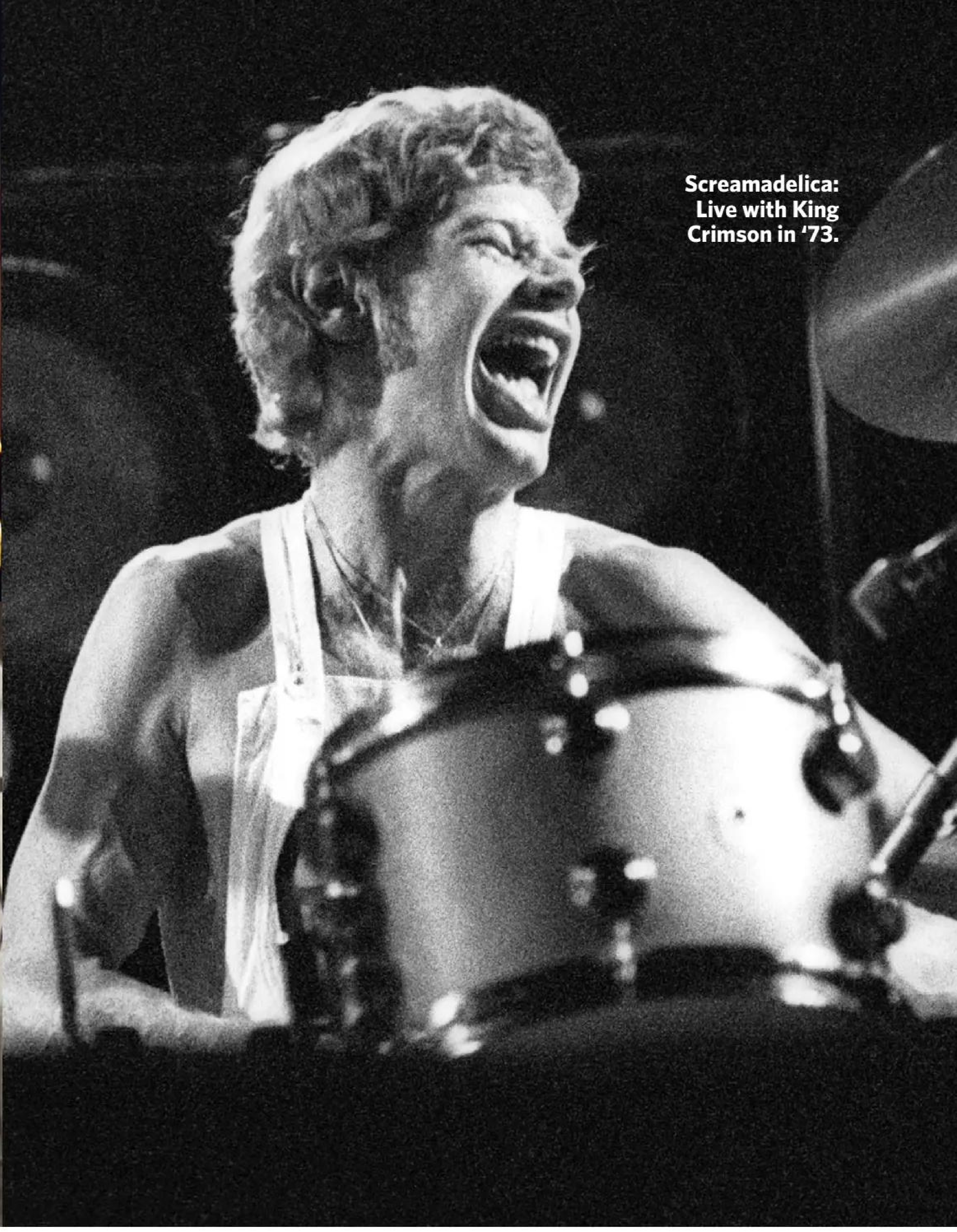
> "Prog rock was a slice of pop culture we can be proud of. But the cycles have a natural arc..."

The Talking Drum: Bruford, with King Crimson in 1973.



Phil-ing in: Bruford joins Genesis at Hammersmith Odeon, June 1976.

Starting out: early days with Yes.



Screamadelica: Live with King Crimson in '73.

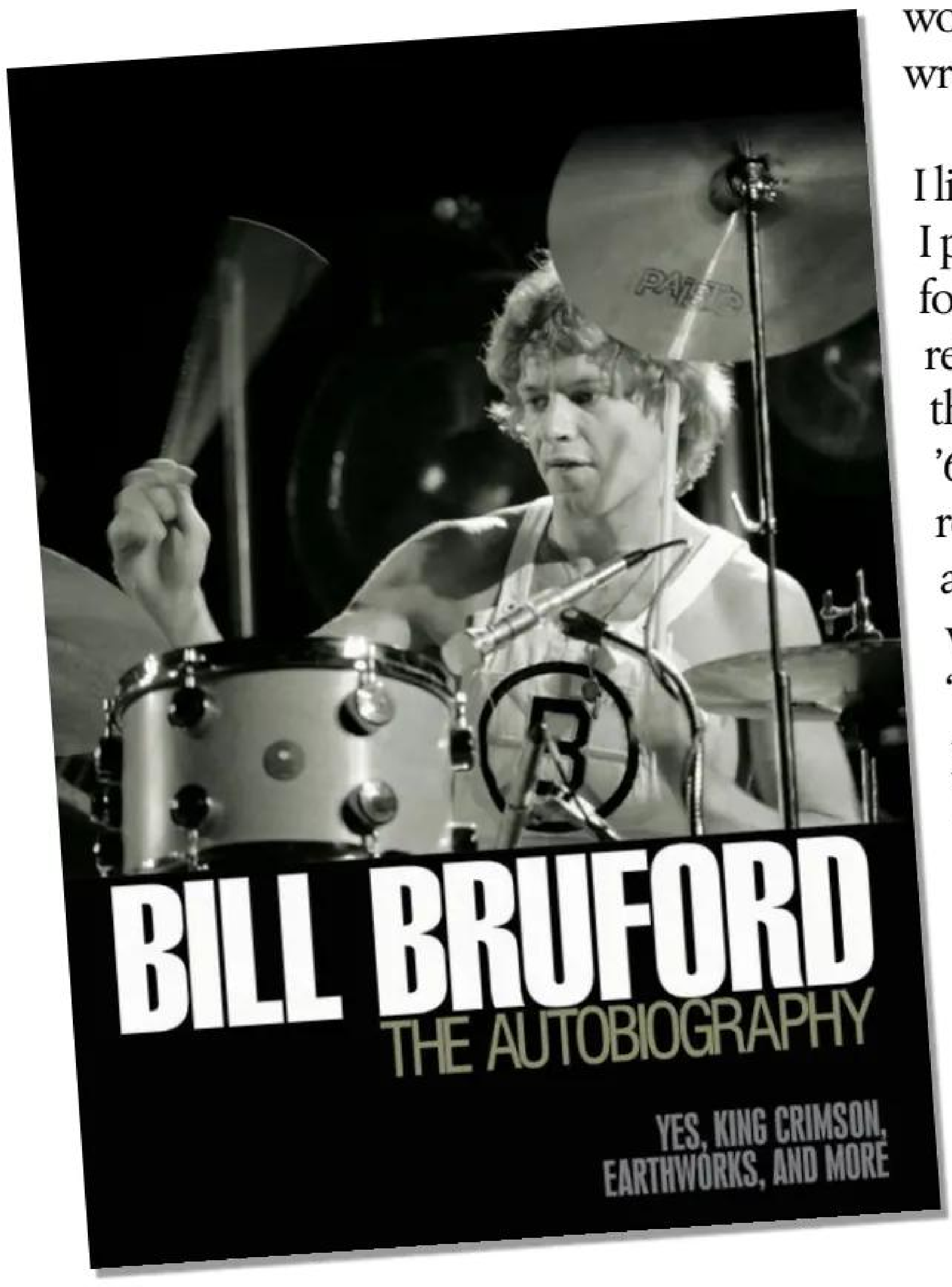
he played with Genesis on their 1976 tour when Phil Collins first stepped up to the mic in place of the departed Peter Gabriel and they needed a drummer.

"It's like do we thank or blame the Chinese for inventing paper?" he responds when asked whether we have the 'big three' to thank for prog rock or, more contentiously, to blame for it. "Progressive rock was fine. It was a slice of popular culture and popular history and we can be very proud of it. Terrific. It suited the time, it led the times… Wonderful. I'm not sure it's relevant now. I think these musical cycles have a natural arc, and its fruition and decay is somewhere around '68 to '76 or something. I would have thought that was probably enough of that.

"Yes, it is still around, still popular and still people buying it. But I can't help that," he says with a laugh from behind a large cup of coffee, and glasses that give him a professorial air.

Those who believe Bruford is dismissive of prog nowadays and that he would prefer to disown it are wrong, though, he insists.

"I like popular music, I like popular culture, I particularly like popular forms of music that have some relevance to the world around them. And indeed from '68 through to '76 progressive rock absolutely did. It had a ton of relevance," he says with genuine enthusiasm. "I was interested in progressive rock, certainly, because I was playing in it. But no more or less interested in jazz or anything else that I'm playing at that moment."



Surprisingly in some ways, Bruford says life on the road with Yes, Genesis and King Crimson wasn't much different from one band to the other, apart from there being an improving professionalism: "When I was with Yes we were kids and we were just starting and there was no money. By the time of King Crimson there was a bit more money in the 70s. By the time we got to the 80s it was all a professional accountancy-run business with real tour budgets. In my first 10 years, through the 70s, we just pissed money away. Nobody knew where anything was going."

Prog bands also largely appeared to share an on-the-road lifestyle which, although not totally devoid of chemical/herbal 'pick-me-ups' and boredom-relieving pranks, certainly didn't even come to the real excess prevalent in other areas of rock at the same time. You can't really imagine a hotel-room scenario involving Jon Anderson, Steve Howe, a groupie and a red snapper, or Robert Fripp or Mike Rutherford heaving a telly out of a hotel window.

"Yeah, the prog bands' outlook was a bit more musicianly, in counterpart to the heavy metal and blues guys," he concedes. "By the 80s we were very clean, although I dare say there was a certain amount of weed flying around in the first 10 years. Genesis was a very clean band, as was my own band. King Crimson was notoriously clean. And ever since about 1980 nobody even drank before we played.

"There was a certain amount of cocaine at some points too, which was a drag. Which band? I'll keep that to myself. The problem if you have half the band on cocaine and half the band on weed, and you're the drummer in the middle, is, 'Well, what tempo *do* you want it at?'"

Contrasting the internal workings of the two bands he is most associated with, he says the modus operandi in Yes was that if you didn't like someone else's idea, it was up to you to come up with something better. "So Jon would start playing something awful on the guitar, and you'd say: 'Oh, Jon, stop. It's terrible.' 'Alright, think of something better!' Then he'd start singing and…

> "With half the band on cocaine and half on weed, as the drummer you're like, 'Well, what tempo do you want?'"

On French TV with the 'fabulously undemocratic' Crimson, March 22, 1974.

"Jon, these words are terrible.' 'You think of something better then!' That's how I started writing."

His first experiences of Crimson, on the other hand, was of a band that was "fabulously undemocratic" in the sense that you could kind of do anything you wanted as long as Robert Fripp, a "well-meaning dictator" according to Bruford, liked it. A difficult band to be in? You bet.

"The making of *Red* was difficult. The making of *Larks Tongues In Aspic* was difficult. Jeez, we always wanted to leave the rehearsal room as soon as possible. We never had any excess material, because as soon as we'd got 40 minutes that everybody could live with it was an album. But I've got no complaints. I never expected it to be easy.

"By the time it got to the 80s we had a fantastic King Crimson. We worked really well, with just a few ideas from Robert demonstrating the general area you'd play in. I thought the trio of *Discipline*, *Beat* and *Three Of A Perfect Pair* were exceptional records. Loved them."

As for Genesis, Bruford was never going to be part of the set-up for any longer than the one tour he participated in back in '76. Not for him the job that Chester Thompson would eventually take.

"When I was with Genesis I was a very badly behaved boy, and I fiddled about, and sniped from the sidelines, because I had no connection with the music. I didn't know what *Supper's Ready* meant. I could play it, but my heart wasn't in it. I was amazed how little my heart was in it."

Whether the 'big three' of Yes, Genesis and Crimson have had any influence on newer bands is not something Bruford looks comfortable answering. He'll mention "sort of neo-progressive bands like Kansas", he's aware that there is Scandinavian prog movement, points out that, of course, King Crimson is still extant, and Porcupine Tree haven't totally passed him by. But he will freely admit that he is "completely out of date. I tend to listen to jazz or I listen to silence. I haven't listened to popular music for quite a while."

These days, when everybody who was ever anybody – and plenty who were always nobody – seems to get back together at some point for one last hurrah, one last adrenalin rush, one more time in the spotlight or, especially, to top up the pension plan, it really is difficult, no matter how much you squeeze your eyes shut and furrow your brow, to imagine Bill Bruford ever on a stage again paradiddling his way through *Close To The Edge*, *Red*, *Danger Money* or any of his other musical milestones.

"If I wanted to make money tomorrow," he says firmly, "I'd call Robert Fripp and we'd do the album *Red*, all the way from front to back, exactly as per the record. We'd do that for the first set, then we'd do *Larks Tongues In Aspic* for the second set, exactly as per the record. We'd make a fortune.

"The fans can't have both: they can't have the people who created *Red* in the first place, if you only want them to go on recreating *Red*. You can't have your cake and eat it," he huffs, chomping down hard on a rich tea or ginger snap or whatever biscuit came with his coffee.

"The problem with these interviews," he says, suddenly looking professorial again, and less like he'd love to stick a drumstick up each of your nostrils, "is that you somehow have to reproduce the smile in the corner of my mouth when I say all this. Because I *dearly* love the fan, bless him, I *dearly* love him. But he always wants what he had yesterday. And that's great. But I'm going to do what I do. I'm just not into that nostalgic, 'It would be nice for the fans,' etcetera. Anyway, happily I'm retired now."

The Office

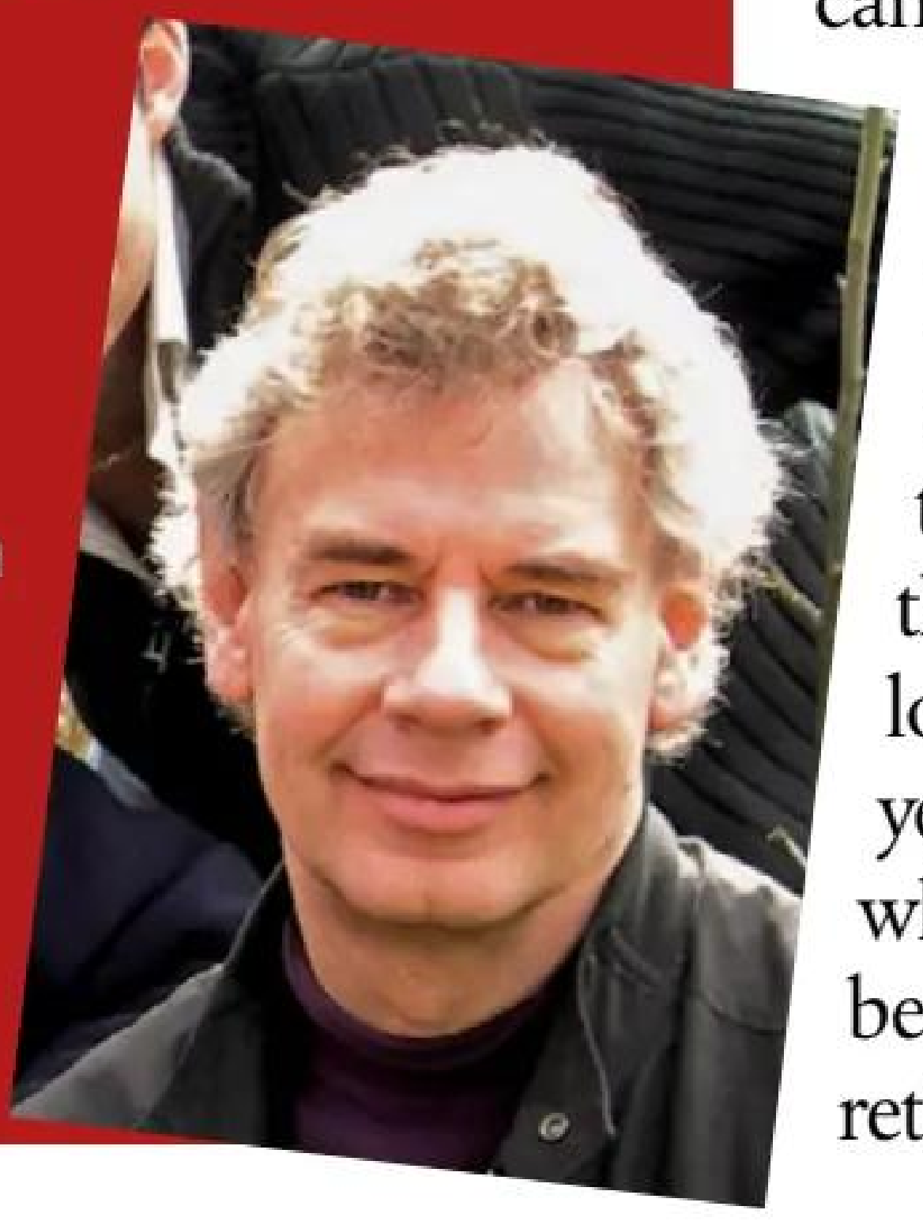
Goodbye set-lists, hello spreadsheets.

Now determinedly retired from playing music Bill Bruford will be filling his time with running his own label. Not one on the lookout for up-and-coming or even established artists to record (don't be surprised if your unsolicited CD comes back marked 'Return To Sender'), but more to look after his own back catalogue. Feeling very fortunate to have the rights back, he has, as he puts it, "gathered all my babies under one roof".

"It's nice to get them all back, sort them out, reissue and remarket them, repackage them, add extra bits if necessary." Certainly it's doubtful whether without his own label he would have seen the albums by his band Bruford being reissued – "don't laugh", he says – on vinyl. Yes, apparently there's sufficient demand." Isn't that amazing?"

Bruford's Winterfold imprint deals with everything up to 1986 – "an artificial watershed which is when I started Earthworks and nominally became a jazz guy"– and Summerfold is home for his jazz recordings thereon. "Winterfold has electric guitars on it, and Summerfold has saxes and pianos."

Bruford also reckons he's pretty good at the business side of selling music. "When it's your own stuff you go in to bat for it like buggery. I'm a real terrier. In my world, if you want to make music you're going to have to tell people it exists."



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Communication Breakdown

After the disaster of *Union*, the *90125* line-up reconvened to make 1994's *Talk*. The result was one of Yes' most under-rated albums – even if the public wasn't listening.

Words: **David West** Portrait: **Robert Knight Archive/Getty**

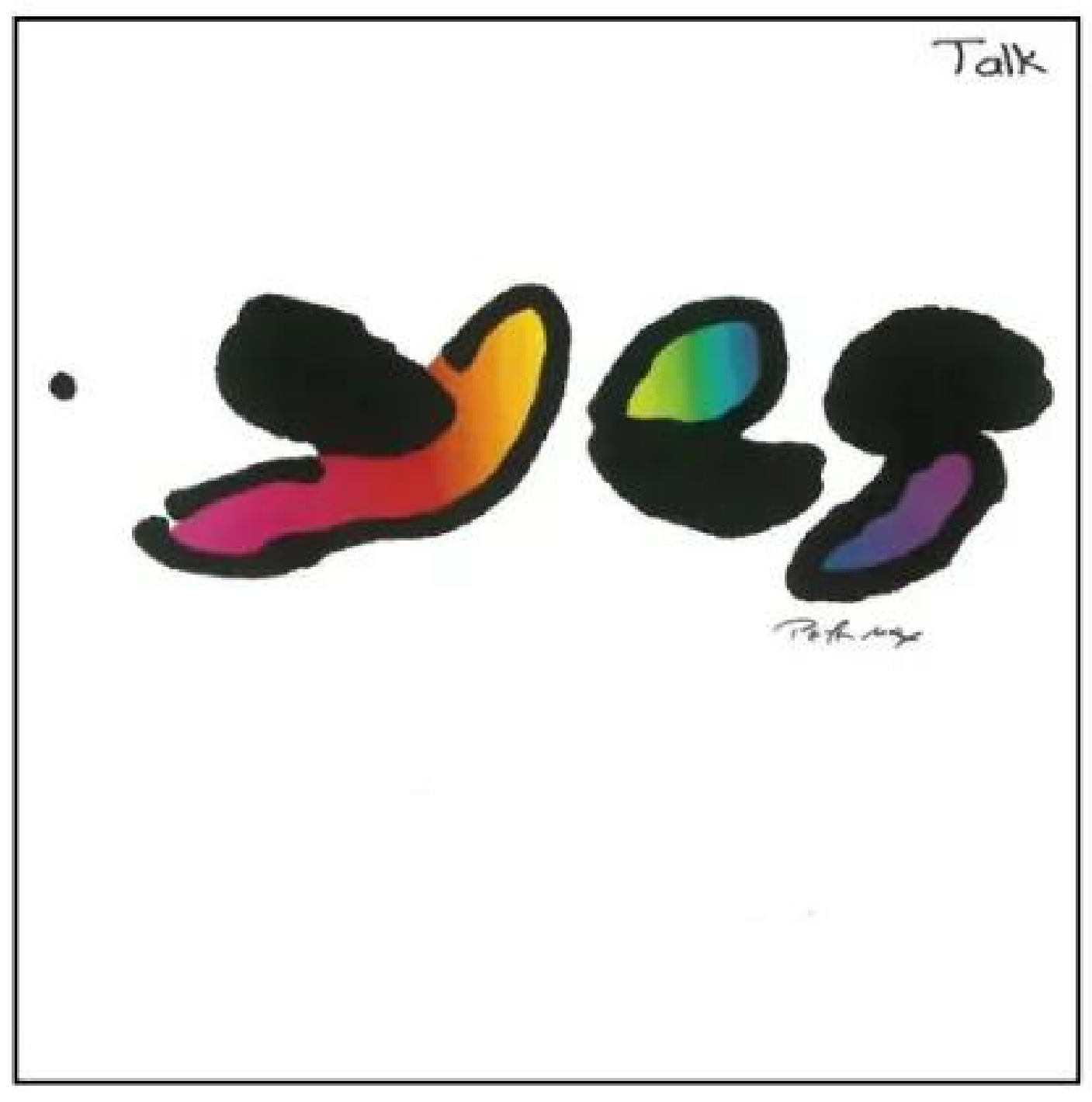
"This is the album I've been waiting for forever. This is the album I've always dreamed of doing," said Jon Anderson, in April 1994 during promo activities for the *Talk* album. "This is the one, this is a dream come true for me on many levels. I'm very excited."

1991's ill-starred *Union* album had been a difficult, contentious creation and afterwards the future of Yes was up in the air once again. Hoping to recapture the commercial success of the group's biggest selling records, *90125* and *Big Generator*, the band's former Atlantic Records boss Phil Carson approached Trevor Rabin to reconvene the mid-80s line-up for his new label, Victory Music. An attempt to involve Rick Wakeman came to naught when Yes' manager Tony Demetriades insisted Wakeman sever ties with his own management team, so Tony Kaye took the keyboard spot alongside Rabin, Anderson, Chris Squire, and Alan White.

In the past, Anderson had felt side-lined during the writing process but for *Talk* he worked on the music with Rabin from the outset. "We got together for the first time on a beach, and just sat down with guitars like the old days and really wrote this album together like a team. And that's what Yes is all about," he said.

Talking to the *Notes From The Edge* website, Rabin described *Talk* as "an important album" for himself and Anderson. "It was really the first time we really got together and wrote together in a real way. Up until then, I'd written and then he'd come on top of it, even though there were collaborations…"

Although the writing process was a shared experience between the pair, the guitarist took the steering wheel when recording began. *Talk* marked the first time that Yes moved into the digital realm with Rabin recording everything onto MacIntosh hard drives rather than onto tape.



"Trevor was really coming into his own," Tony Kaye told *Rolling Stone* in February 2021. "It was the beginning of recording digitally. He'd set up a studio at his house. People started to really dial in their part. It was what has become normal. That was the beginning of it, though drums were recorded live in a studio, but not with a band. It was composing an album and it was Trevor's thing."

Rabin's production methods were not universally loved. Comparing the *Keys To Ascension* sessions with making *Talk*, Chris Squire said: "I'm certainly not putting Trevor down because if I do I'll never hear the last of it, but it definitely felt like we were working within the parameters of a band, an organical band situation as opposed to one person's idea and a computer and it's quite a different thing."

Squire's misgivings aside, the resultant record that sounds bright and clean. Alan White's drums are upfront and punchy, Rabin's guitar cuts through the mix, and the overall effect is somewhere between progressive rock and AOR, harking back to the vibe of *90125*. Certainly, Rabin was pleased with the fruits of his labours. "I just loved doing *Talk*," he said. "Every time I listen to it, I'm proud; I'm extremely happy with it. There's very few albums where I listen to the whole album, and I'm not unhappy with anything."

Released on 21 March 1994, *Talk* produced two singles, *The Calling* and *Walls*. The former was written with Supertramp's Roger Hodgson, who had been approached by Rabin with a view to joining Yes when Anderson left after the *Big Generator* tour.

"Even though I did not think that was a good idea, he and I really hit it off and we did spend quite a bit of time in the studio and, yes, there is music that we did together that has not been released," Hodgson told CBS. *Walls* is a great example of what the album does best, with a strong pop hook married to Rabin's ultra-slick production, and the track earned the band an appearance on the Late Show with David Letterman.

Yes circa 1994: (l-r) Alan White, Trevor Rabin, Jon Anderson, Chris Squire, Tony Kaye.

With a new Yes logo designed by Peter Max on the cover, *Talk* reached No.20 in the UK album charts and No.33 in the US, but failed to replicate the multi-platinum success of *90125* and *Big Generator*. While Rabin's production methods might have been cutting edge for the time, the album's mix of progressive rock and polished AOR was hardly capturing the zeitgeist. With the notable exception of Pink Floyd's *The Division Bell*, the

"We got together on a beach, and just sat down with guitars like the old days."
Jon Anderson

rock charts were dominated by the grunge of Pearl Jam and Soundgarden, alongside punk upstarts Green Day. It didn't help that the tour to support *Talk* was delayed when Anderson slipped two discs in his back, so the band didn't hit the road until June, by which point the record had long since slipped out of the charts.

The 77-date run overwhelmingly concentrated on the United States, with a handful of dates in Canada, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Japan, but none in Europe. To make matters worse, Carson's Victory Music went bankrupt at the end of the year. When the tour ended, Rabin decided he'd be happier working on film soundtracks and Tony Kaye packed his organ away and retired from the music industry.

"It was the beginning of the end of that era," said Kaye in 2021. "There were conflicts. It's not easy to keep everyone happy. The album was not being received that well. I liked the tour. I only have that bootleg in Chile of the entire concert. I thought the band was actually great."

With hindsight, the odds were stacked against *Talk* – Phil Carson called it the right album at the wrong time – but it remains a strong musical statement. "Artistically it was one of the highlights for me," said Rabin.

The guitarist isn't wrong. One of the great under-rated Yes albums, *Talk* is the record they should have made after *Big Generator*, but sometimes the stars just refuse to align.

Yes Mk IV… and Mk XV: (l-r) Rick Wakeman, Chris Squire, Steve Howe, Jon Anderson and Alan White in 2002.

Days Of Future Past

With three different singers and a rotating cast of band members old and new taking turns at plotting their course, **Yes** soldiered on from the mid-90s into the 21st century. Yet for all the line-up chaos, still the albums kept coming – even if the fans clamoured for the old songs.

Words: David West **Image:** Mick Hutson/Getty Images

After 1994's *Talk* failed to recapture the band's commercially winning ways of the 80s, Yes turned back towards their 70s sound and personnel in the hope of rekindling their fortunes. In late 1995, Jon Anderson, Chris Squire and Alan White reunited with Steve Howe and Rick Wakeman to record two new songs, *Be The One* and *That, That Is*. The following year the band recorded three live dates at the Fremont Theater in San Luis Obispo, California, which became the basis for the two *Keys To Ascension* albums, featuring a mix of live performances of the classics alongside new studio material.

Howe was clear that Yes had broken with the Rabin years. "Most people know I've never been very comfortable with Yes in the 80s," said Howe in Stuart Chambers' Yes biography, throwing shade at his now-departed replacement's MacIntosh-powered efforts. "I do like to keep my sound as uncomputerized as possible — not that I don't think it's marvellous what we can do, but it doesn't work with my music. My music is hands on."

When Howe returned following the departure of Trevor Rabin after the *Talk* tour, it was clear that he wanted a clean break from Rabin's legacy. With Rick Wakeman back in the line-up, the reformed 70s incarnation of Yes made their intentions clear with 1996's *Keys To Ascension*. The album consisted of live tracks recorded at the Fremont Theatre, San Luis Obispo, California, including a vigorous interpretation of Paul Simon's *America*, rounded out with two new studio cuts, *Be The One* and *That, That Is*.

Unfortunately, trouble was brewing. "*Keys To Ascension II* was more studio based, and I really enjoyed playing on it," said Wakeman. "I didn't enjoy the final product, because after I left, they wiped most of the things off that I did, including one whole piece..."

Unable to get hold of an album master, Wakemen threatened to secure an injunction against its release so he could hear the record. "I guessed what might happen and sure enough, virtually everything I'd done had been wiped off," he said. "When they came to tour in England, Alan called me up and said, 'Would you like to do the English tour?' I said, 'Absolutely not.'"

With Wakeman gone yet again, chaos reigned. A 1997 summer tour was cancelled, and everyone went their separate ways, but one man was determined not to sit back and watch Yes disintegrate. Billy Sherwood had been in the live band for 1994's *Talk* tour as an extra guitarist and keyboard player, and thereafter he started composing with Chris Squire for their Conspiracy group. The pair used those songs as the starting point for the next Yes album, *Open Your Eyes*, sending

> "I've never been very comfortable with Yes in the 80s. I like to keep my sound as uncomputerized as possible." **Steve Howe**

CAMERA PRESS/DDP

Meet the new boys: Yes circa 1997 with Billy Sherwood (left) and Igor Khoroshev (right)...

demo tapes to everyone else via FedEx. Jon Anderson was impressed with what he heard. "The musical format is definitely Chris and Billy putting their heads together and creating their version of Yes at this moment in time," said the singer.

Released in November 1997, *Open Your Eyes* limped to No.105 in the UK, Yes' worst ever British chart position, and fared even worse in the US, spending just a single week on the Billboard chart at No.151. It was all the album deserved, in truth. Sherwood's production is cloying and Anderson's lyrics are trite platitudes, reaching their vacuous nadir on *Man In The Moon* – *"I am the man in the moon,"* he sings, *"And I hope to shine upon you very soon."*

The subsequent tour saw Russian pianist Igor Khoroshev hired to handle the keys, allowing Sherwood to play more guitar onstage. Khoroshev officially joined the fold when work began on 1999's *The Ladder* with producer Bruce Fairbairn, best known for helping turn Bon Jovi into superstars.

"Yes seem to have come round in a beautiful cycle," said Anderson at the time. "It's remarkable that we're still making music, and it's viable music, and it's very adventurous still. It is still, to coin a phrase, progressive."

The resultant album was consistently stronger than its predecessor, with Yes themselves sounding like they were having fun again: *Face To Face* bubbles along on Squire's percolating bassline, while *The Messenger* is surprisingly funky. Sadly, Fairbairn died of a heart attack as they were finishing production and mixing, and the album was dedicated to him.

Fittingly, *The Ladder* outperformed *Open Your Eyes* on both sides of the Atlantic, reaching No.36 in the UK and No.99 in the US. It was supported by a mammoth tour that ran from September 1999 to the March 2000, yet when Yes returned to the road that June for the Masterworks Tour, they focussed exclusively on material from the 70s.

"It turned out that the fans really wanted to hear the more epic side of the band, including songs such as *Gates Of Delirium* which we haven't performed in many years," Anderson told Yesworld. "It just so happens that we were moving in this direction as well and it allows us to honour the passion and loyalty of our fans while presenting new musical challenges to us as a group."

Following an incident in which he allegedly assaulted two female security personnel at a show in Virginia, Khoroshev's services were no longer required. So, it was four-piece band, Anderson, Howe, Squire and White, that recorded 2001's *Magnification*, accompanied by the San Diego Symphony Orchestra. A notably superior outing to 1993's *Symphonic Music Of Yes*, *Magnification* succeeded where that album struggled by respecting the essence of the Yes sound.

"The idea of working with an orchestra is just so logical for this band," said Anderson. "Yes music is a style of its own, it's got longer form pieces of music that were actually created with orchestra in mind and that's why in the early days we had Rick Wakeman playing twenty keyboards with all different sounds like orchestra strings, violins, cellos, woodwind, brass sections. We go out on stage and hopefully try to sound like a big orchestra but when you've got the real deal, well, why not try it?"

The four movements of *In The Presence Of* showed the band had lost none of their ambition, and *Spirit Of Survival*, driven by Squire's fat bassline, proved they could still rock with the orchestra. "I really think that we've done a project that's really what Yes has always been about," said Anderson, "just pushing that envelope a bit and we do it because we love music, and we love the adventure of being a band, and we love Yes music."

Unfortunately, the public didn't seem up for this particular adventure, but that didn't seem to hurt the 68-date *Magnification* tour, which started in July 2001 and ran into mid-December. When the band hit the road again the following year, Wakeman came with them and the compilation album *The Ultimate Yes: 35th Anniversary Collection* saw the band finally crack back into the Top Ten in the UK.

After *Magnification*, it would a full decade before Yes released another studio record and when *Fly From Here* arrived in 2011, it was without Jon Anderson.

After an extended break following the *35th Anniversary Tour*, Yes were set to resume touring in 2008. Then Anderson suffered a severe asthma attack that saw him admitted to hospital and he was advised to take several months off to recuperate. "I'd like everyone know how deeply disappointed I am by this turn of events," he said at the time. "I was looking forward to celebrating our music with the amazing family of Yes fans once

> "I wish the guys all the best in their 'solo' work, but I just wish this could have been done in a more gentlemanly fashion."
> **Jon Anderson**

... in 2010 with Benoît David (centre) ...

PRESS/DIMO SAFARI

... and in 2014 with Jon Davison (second left).

FUTURE/KEVIN NIXON

again; but as we all know, health must come before anything else."

However, the rest of the group decided not to wait for Anderson to recover. Instead, the band recruited Canadian singer Benoît David, from proggers Mystery and the Yes tribute outfit Close To The Edge, and hit the road with Rick Wakeman's son Oliver on keys.

"I feel very disrespected, having spent most of this year creating songs and constant ideas for the band," said Jon Anderson via his website. "I wish the guys all the best in their 'solo' work, but I just wish this could have been done in a more gentlemanly fashion. After all Yes is a precious musical band. This is not Yes on tour."

Gentlemanly or not, Yes pressed on. Trevor Horn returned as producer for *Fly From Here*, joined by fellow ex-Buggle and *Drama* alumnus Geoff Downes on keys. *Fly From Here* struck a balance between harking back to their 70s prog style and the slicker, punchier sound that Horn brought to their 80s albums, giving them a Top 40 on both sides of the Atlantic.

The five-part title track was developed out of an idea from the *Drama* writing sessions. "We played it live on the 1980 tour when it was just five minutes long. Now it's an extravaganza," said Squire. *Life On A Film Set* captures the charm and playful inventiveness of classic Yes, and Howe sounds inspired throughout, taking a gorgeous solo acoustic spot on *Solitaire*.

David himself took confident command of the material, although when the album was updated and reissued as *Fly From Here: Return Trip* in 2018, Horn had replaced the Canadian's original vocals with his own.

"Because Benoit is French-Canadian, English wasn't his native language," Horn told *Prog*. "And Yes lyrics are difficult enough to understand if you're English in the first place! So it was kind of tricky for him to understand the nuances of what he was singing. And that took up time, really, on that record."

David's tenure with the band ended abruptly in February 2012. In an odd parallel with what happened to Anderson, he was struck down with a respiratory illness and, rather than cancel tour dates, Yes swiftly replaced him with Jon Davison, who was recommended to Squire by Taylor Hawkins of the Foo Fighters.

David thought Davison would cover his spot until he recovered, but the new guy turned out to be a permanent fixture. While no one in Yes bothered to tell him directly, the Canadian took his dismissal with remarkable good grace.

"I felt I was letting everyone down. The band members asked if I would mind being replaced for the April shows. I was pleased to learn Jon would be my replacement," he told *Classic Rock*. "I subsequently learned from a band member's interview that I had officially left Yes and that my departure was permanent. As this is the situation, everyone should know that I will be eternally grateful for the opportunity I was given." Similarly, he was never told about Horn replacing his vocals on *Fly From Here*. With friends like these...

Yes maintained a marathon touring schedule in 2013 and 2014. The *Three Album Tour* saw them playing *The Yes Album*, *Close To The Edge*, and *Going For The One* in full, again proving that however good or bad the newer albums might be, the fans came out for the classics.

With 2014's *Heaven & Earth*, Davison had the chance to create his first new music with Yes, co-writing seven of the album's eight tracks. The album charted well, No.20 in the UK, No.26 in the US, but it's a bland listen. Roy Thomas Baker's production is thin and toothless, and there's no get-up-and-go in the music that meanders along inoffensively.

"For me, that was a hellishly tricky album to make," Howe told *Prog*, "partly because there was an old-fashioned pressure on us: we had to finish it before we moved on to the next thing already on the books that was coming up. It was done in a slightly chaotic way and if people have got criticisms of it, I've got no problems with that because I've got my own."

No one could have known it at the time, but *Heaven & Earth* marked the end of an era. Within a year of the album's release Chris Squire, the only member of Yes to play in every iteration of the band since its inception, would be gone and the group would have to carry on without him.

CHRIS SQUIRE 1948-2015

Starship Trooper

On June 27, 2015, linchpin Yes bassist Chris Squire passed away following a battle with cancer. **Alan White** knew Squire better than most. In the wake of his death, the drummer looked back at four decades of making music together – and what the future held for Yes.

Words: Rich Wilson **Portrait:** Lynn Goldsmith/Getty

The devastation felt by fellow musicians and fans following the news of Chris Squire's death has been immeasurable. Tributes have accurately portrayed Squire as one of the world's most innovative and talented bass players, as well as recognising his gregarious personality and ability to keep Yes functioning at the highest level, despite what often appeared to be an ever-changing line-up.

For all those accolades, his loss on a personal level has been keenly felt by those who've worked closely with him over the past five decades, and Yes drummer Alan White has been a constant rhythmic companion for 43 of those years. Despite sounding clearly distressed at the loss of Squire, White is keen to pay tribute to his close friend, reflecting on the last few weeks and how Squire had remained optimistic about defeating the disease.

Chris Squire with his Yes bandmate and friend Alan White.

ROBERT KNIGHT ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

"It isn't an easy subject for any of us to approach and it has been a difficult couple of weeks," he says. "We knew what was happening quite a while ago but it really happened quicker than we anticipated. Finally, the thing that let him down was his heart, not the cancer, as he just got very weakened by everything. I did speak to Chris quite often when I could and he was fully optimistic about beating this thing and going on the road next year. His attitude was wonderful and I didn't see this blow coming for a long time. It's been really devastating for everybody involved and he was like family to me. I've been married to my wife for 33 years but I've known Chris 10 years longer than that. So you get to know somebody like family, how you can count on them, and how he always seemed to be there when needed."

From a musical perspective, the pair had developed an understanding that remains rare. There was an unspoken, subconscious appreciation of how a song would develop when in the studio, or which direction any subtle, fresh twists added to onstage performances would take. Squire's style was also pioneering, often using the bass to provide a lead melody, and as White accurately observes, that technique became part of what made Yes albums so idiosyncratic.

"I can see him now with a Rickenbacker on, playing his bass almost like a lead guitar," he says.

> "When he was ill, Chris asked me personally if I would keep everything going, regardless of what happened, which is what we are now attempting to do."

"It really was distinctive and became a big stamp on what Yes' music is, and was, throughout all the periods of the band. You could always hear Chris' style within the music. In the music business, Chris was an icon and a guy who had developed a style nobody else had. He really laid the foundation stone for a lot of bass players and musicians to look up to, including myself.

"We went through so many really incredible times together. I played with him constantly for the last 43 years, so it's pretty heart-wrenching for me to be all of a sudden faced with performing without him. We had a relationship where we didn't have to speak that much to each other about what the other person would do. We just knew over the years what was going to happen next, you know?"

Squire's musical reputation aside, his role within Yes was pivotal. The only member to appear on every album, he became the band's natural leader, especially in later years when their line-up was more fluid. Yet even during the 1970s, Squire felt an immense responsibility to ensure the music they were recording was at what he perceived to be a high level, something White recalls would lead to a few inner tensions – especially with Jon Anderson. But it was that creative spark and occasional abrasion between the pair that he believes was responsible for creating such high-calibre music.

"The band was started by him and Jon, and they had what I would say was a great relationship, even if a lot of other people wouldn't!" says White with a wry laugh. "Let's just say they had a very yin and yang relationship. Jon would love something and Chris would think it was awful. Chris wouldn't like something but Jon would adore it, sometimes out of spite I think. So that yin and yang aspect was really the beginning of what Yes was and what Yes became. It was the fact that Jon and Chris were tugging at each other's strings, trying to get the best out of what there was, that made it great. It would usually end up being better because they both decided on something down the middle and that always worked incredibly well. It really would happen a lot.

"I think, over the years, Chris felt he was one of the go-to people for Yes. He was always there, making sure we were doing the right thing. He gave a lot of thought to the band and he thought of the band as the number one priority. It was a huge thing in his life. It was the driving force for him to wake up and carry on with it every single day. He was also always so proud of the fact that we were Yes and always a little bit different from other bands. We had our own kind of stamp on the industry."

> "He was always so proud of the fact that we were Yes and always a little bit different from other bands. We had our own kind of stamp on the industry."

Squire was far from a dictatorial presence within the band, though. Indeed, he would often quietly watch from the side of the studio before making his point. Rick Wakeman once noted that Squire was someone who would "come to the fore when necessary", and it was that ability to sift out any musical weakness and firmly state an opinion when it became essential that became central to the Yes machine. It's an opinion shared by White, who recalls with fondness the countless times when that happened.

"I remember that during some of the early days when we used to be mixing the album," he says. "Back then it was all about striving for perfection and making music nobody else was really doing. We created a standard by ourselves and the musicianship from everyone concerned took off in leaps and bounds. The bar was set pretty high back then and still is.

"There's a very famous picture I've got here on the wall of our engineer Eddy Offord and the band. The photograph is of the whole band all with their hands on the faders on the desk and he's just watching everybody. That really was what it was like as everybody wanted their parts to come out. Sometimes, when something was going on, Chris would take a seat in the background. But when it was

GETTY/DICK BARNATT

required, he would always step up and be forthright about things and would say, ‘No, I’m sorry guys but this is the way it should be.’ Nine times out of ten, we would end up doing it that way, and then later you’d admit to yourself that it did sound great. He was a perfectionist. If there was ever a slight flaw in the system or the music, Chris would find it. That would then be shared and we would try to resolve it.”

Such a quest to record music that Squire deemed to be flawless was undoubtedly hugely trying, and indeed tales of afternoons spent arguing over single chord changes are rife. Even on more productive days, when ideas had developed into plausible tracks, there would be overnight changes of heart, leading the band to discard vast swathes of music to begin the writing process all over again. With hindsight and perspective, though, White recalls such tales with an appreciative and warm fondness, clearly thankful that Squire’s presence had pushed the band in the right direction.

“I can’t tell you the amount of times where we would take something home and come back the following day into the studio and Chris would say, ‘This doesn’t work at all, we need to try it this way,’” White says. “He’d take the stuff that we’d spent all day doing, listen to it in the car and then come back in the next day and say we needed to start again. That happened on so many occasions in Yes, but things always sounded better in the end.”

At times like these, it seems unseemly and almost tasteless to even consider what lies ahead for Yes. The loss of Squire remains both shocking and distressing, and it feels extremely inappropriate at this time of mourning for his family and bandmates to even consider discussing future plans. There’s a feeling that all concerned need a period of reflection away from the band, and the mere notion of touring or recording seems trivial in comparison to the personal loss felt by those close to the bassist. Yet White is determined to bring up the topic.

“When he was ill, Chris asked me personally if I would keep everything going, regardless of what happened, which is what we are now attempting to do,” he says. “The only thing that ever concerned him was that Yes carried on, that we were respected and that the band always had top-class musicians creating music in our own style. He was very much the driving force in that whole area.

“It’s not going to be easy but we’ll have to just get on with it. We can’t just drop our tools — we have to keep the Yes name going and really keep this torch alight. I certainly will be carrying a torch for Chris to keep everything going, generating great music and putting together some great stage shows. We just have to make it happen, and the sense of perfection he always had should still maintain itself in the music. We have to keep that rolling on and keep the Yes name alive.”

With a certain cruelty of timing, the band are embarking on a summer tour of the US throughout August and September, giving them only a short time to recover before appearing again onstage. Billy Sherwood had already been recruited for the tour, given Squire’s inability to perform when battling his illness, and there’s every sign that he may ultimately become Squire’s permanent replacement.

For all those practical difficulties, White is hoping the fans will embrace Sherwood, given his virtually impossible task of replacing such an icon. He is also acutely aware that it will be emotional to perform without his friend in front of him, and admits that he finds it a dreadful prospect.

“On this next tour we’ll be using Billy Sherwood, who was a very close friend of Chris’ for a lot of years,” says White. “He knows the bass and moulded himself on Chris in the early days, and is familiar with pretty much every Yes part there is. Hopefully people will accept that now. He was in the band for a while as well, so it’s not like he’s going to be an alien character coming in.

“We know how much Chris will be missed and hopefully we can make up for it. The tour starts in August and it would be wrong to say I’m looking forward to it. It’s going to be really hard for me to get used to not looking at his huge framework on stage in front of me, driving the band. All I can do is just get back into the driving seat with everybody else on stage and basically do it for him. I’m going to have to buckle up and get on with it.”

Grumbleweeds
TIME
SEEING IS BELIEVING
Shane Peters
KATE MARTYN
TONIC
Nothin' but... 'The Best'?
SOLATRAXION
BANANA SPLIT
BRIDGIE FRY
GRANDEE
ALLEY CAT
"LAST CHANCE"
GANDEY'S CIRCUS
DOMINO
DAVE SHERIFF
SCHOONER
CRAZY APE
BOBBY KNUTT
KIND A MAGIC

"I stopped smoking in 1978 and drinking in '85. I was going to die otherwise."

GET CAPE. WEAR CAPE. FLY

Turning down Bowie to join Yes, heart attacks at 25, preposterous concept albums… we caught up with **Rick Wakeman** in 2015 to look back at his colourful career.

Words: **Mark Blake** Portraits: **Kevin Nixon**

Hollywood actor Bradley Cooper's disembodied head is currently in a small village just outside Doncaster. Next to it stands a waxwork replica of his torso. The body parts belong to a US branch of Madame Tussauds and have been sent here, to a costumier's in Yorkshire, to be measured for an outfit.

Stagewear Unlimited have been dressing showbiz stars for more than 40 years. Their client list has included Michael Jackson, Norman Wisdom, Cannon And Ball, geriatric DJ/stripper 'Gyrating Jeff' – and Saxon.

Another of its regular patrons, former Yes keyboard player and TV pundit Rick Wakeman, is here today, being fitted for a new outfit for a forthcoming performance of his 1975 extravaganza *The Myths And Legends Of King Arthur And His Knights Of The Round Table*.

Stagewear Unlimited's walls and ceilings are plastered with yellowing photos commemorating more than four decades of light entertainment. Wakeman, with his brightly striped jacket and long blond-white hair, fits right in. He has the repartee of a Working Men's Club compere or after-dinner speaker (he's off to Sheffield for a corporate gig later), and is surely the only member of the 70s rock aristocracy whose interview chat jumps from David Bowie to Frankie Vaughan; from Jon Anderson to Joe Pasquale.

But Wakeman looks, frankly, knackered. He's currently producing the final scores for his 2016 remake of *King Arthur*, and planning its grand performance at the Stone Free Festival at London's O2 Arena in June. Also in the works are more TV shows, more 'corporates' and a new album with former Yes men Jon Anderson and Trevor Rabin. You suspect the 66-year-old Wakeman will keep going until he can't keep going any more.

Showbusiness is in Wakeman's blood. He was born in May 1949 in Perivale, West London, to musical parents Cyril and Mildred. "Mum and Dad had been in a concert party before the war," he says, settling into a comfy chair. "Dad played piano, Mum and Aunt Esther and Aunt Olive sang, Uncle Stan played the banjo and Uncle Laurie was a comedian. But the war wrecked all that."

Cyril Wakeman gave it up and went to work for a building firm. But on Sunday nights the extended clan joined him and Mildred in the front room of their terraced house in Northolt to relive the old days. The five-year-old Rick would creep out of bed, and listen, mesmerised, as Uncle Stan did his George Formby routine and his mum and aunts sang the old music-hall number *The Haddock, The Kipper And The Bloater*.

Eventually the infant Rick was allowed to join in and play the family's upright piano. "Everybody clapped, and I thought, I'll have some more of that, and refused to go back to bed." Wakeman was already hooked on "the joy of applause". Later, aged 10, he went rogue at Wood End Junior School's annual talent show by playing Russ Conway's piano hit *Side Saddle* instead of his rehearsed piece, Clementi's *Sonatina*. "And all the parents clapped."

It was uphill or downhill from there, depending whether you were Rick or his piano teacher, Mrs Symes, who described her precocious pupil as gifted but undisciplined. "Which was a fair assessment," he agrees. "I'd get fed up of learning what I was supposed to be learning – 'Forget Grade Four, why can't I just jump to Grade Eight?' I've been like that my whole life."

Wakeman's headmaster predicted that his wayward charge would "end up in one of three places: 10 Downing Street, prison or on stage at the London Palladium". Wakeman hoped for the latter, and played in trad jazz, blues and country and western groups, everywhere from church halls to strip clubs. He enrolled at the Royal College Of Music in 1968, but quit the following year because he was being offered so much session work.

"Mum was distraught, bless her," he says. "There was always an element of that Ronnie Corbett sitcom *Sorry* with me and my mum. I was Timothy Lumsden, an only child, and she really *did* tell me to make sure I wore clean underwear in case I got knocked over."

It was a difficult time for the Wakemans. For a fortnight after her son left college, Mildred avoided Chatterton's butchers in Northolt, where she often met up with other local mothers. "But then I played on Bowie's *Space Oddity*, it was a hit, and she was in there like a shot," he laughs: 'Oh, my Richard played on that…' She was a great proud mum.

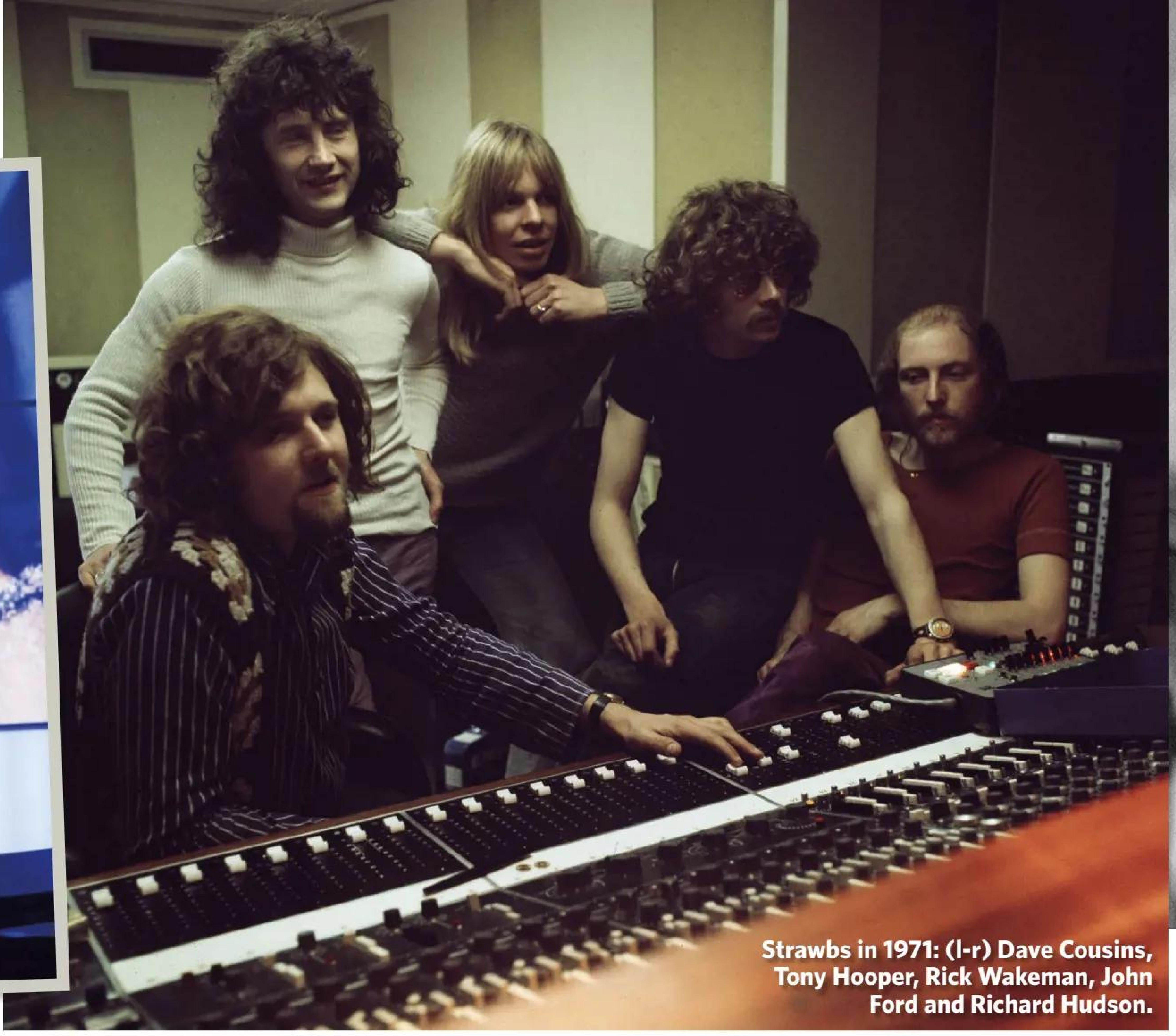
"David Bowie was the biggest influence and encouragement I could ever have wished for," Wakeman said, shortly after Bowie's death. Just this week he learned that his piano rendition of *Life On Mars* (he played on the 1971 original), released to raise money for the Macmillan cancer charity, had reached No.1 on the Physical Singles Chart.

"I'd be lying if I said I wasn't chuffed to old boots," he admits. "These days there's a chart for everything, though – Very Old Prog Rocker Plays Piano Chart. ▷

1972: scoring a bullseye with solo debut *Six Wives Of Henry VIII*.

INSETS: GETTY

Playing a tribute to David Bowie on *This Morning* on February 23, 2016.



Strawbs in 1971: (l-r) Dave Cousins, Tony Hooper, Rick Wakeman, John Ford and Richard Hudson.

But it's great. And also bloody typical that the one time I have a number one single I don't earn out of it. But that's the story of my life."

Wakeman claims two record companies have since asked him to make an album of Bowie covers, but he refused. "I did *Life On Mars* on Simon Mayo's Radio 2 show, and thousands of people contacted the BBC and suggested I put it out for a cancer charity. It was for a good cause. I played on *Space Oddity* and *Life On Mars* and *Hunky Dory*. But I don't want it to look like I'm cashing in."

Rick's other 'hits' in the late 60s and early 70s included Cat Stevens's *Morning Has Broken* and T.Rex's *Get It On*. In 1970 he joined folk rockers The Strawbs. One day he got a phone call from prog rock pioneers Yes, and on the same day one from Bowie. Apparently it was a toss-up between joining Yes or Bowie's new group the Spiders From Mars. He chose Yes, because he wanted to write his own music. "I often wonder what might have been."

Wakeman made his Yes debut on their 1971 album *Fragile*, before unleashing his growing arsenal of keyboards on 1972's *Close To The Edge* and the following year's *Tales From Topographic Oceans*.

At a show in Connecticut, he took a shine to the gig compere's flamboyant cape and gave him 200 dollars for it. Like Tommy Cooper and his fez, Wakeman had found his trademark gimmick. Rick in his shiny cloak became a fixture on the front page of *Melody Maker*. He brought humour and showbiz flair to Yes's knotty prog rock – or tried to. "Yes was a straight-faced band and Rick wasn't," Yes's guitarist Steve Howe said in 1974.

Wakeman's well-travelled anecdotes about Yes present him as the boozy, meat-eating joker tirelessly teasing his spiritually-minded, vegetarian bandmates. The story of him eating a curry on stage at Manchester's Free Trade Hall has done the rounds forever. But there was also the time he asked Yes's on-tour chef to cook a roast turkey dinner for him. Wakeman later recalled how each of his bandmates, apart from the unbreakable Howe, approached him afterwards to ask for turkey leftovers, but insisted he didn't tell the others.

Wakeman pokes fun at Yes's grandiosity, but sounds a bit wistful for those days. "This might be a terrible analogy, but Yes's music reminds me of *Fawlty Towers* or *Father Ted* – the prog rock of comedy," he offers. "Each time you watch those shows or listen to those albums you spot something you missed before and go: 'Oh, that's clever.'"

Like a traditional comic mourning the death of clubland, you have a hunch Wakeman thinks music was better in the 70s. "It was a period when people wanted something more than just pop," he says. "Nothing wrong with pop, but Yes was music you could really immerse yourself in.

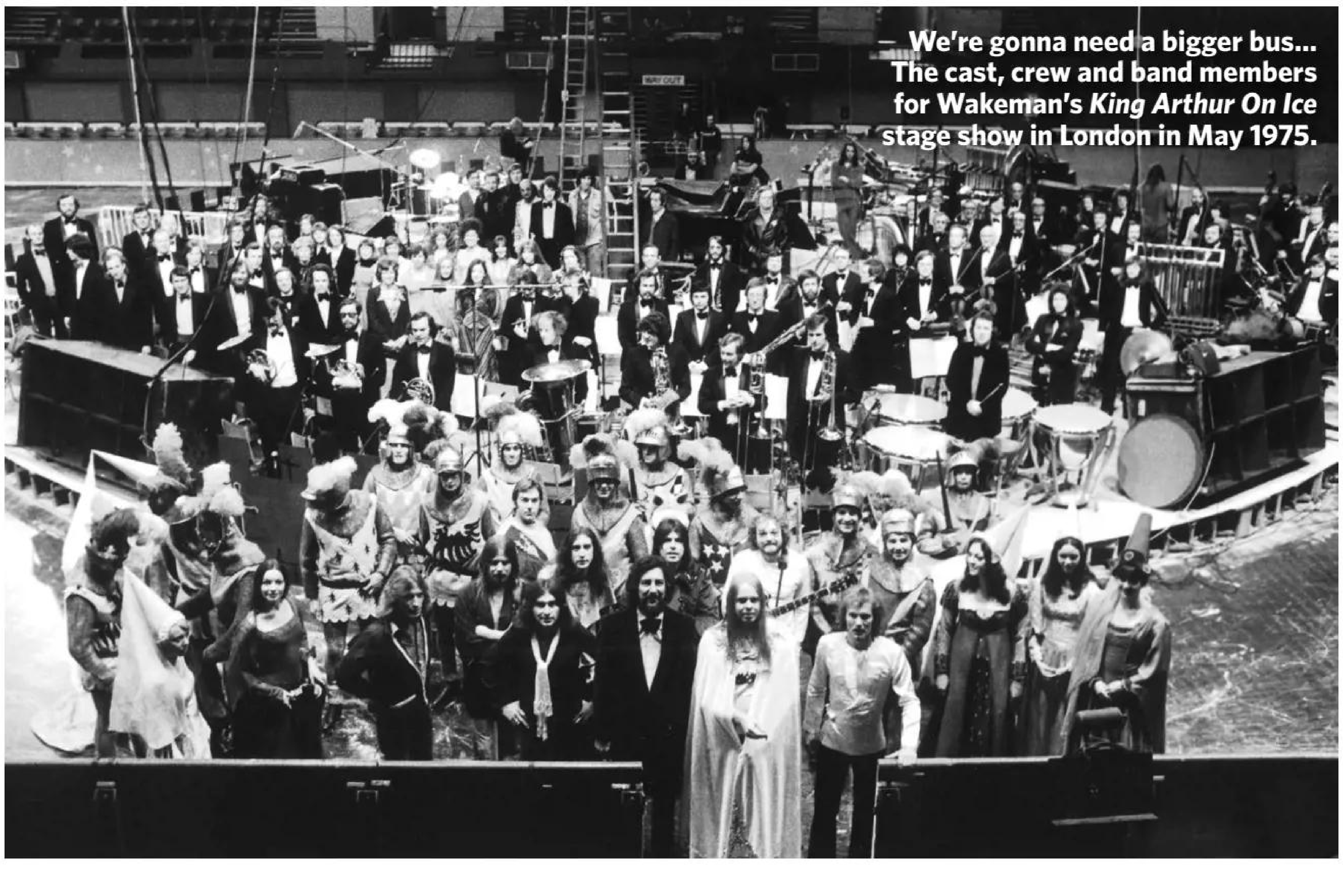
"When it worked, it really worked. *Fragile*, *Close To The Edge* and *Going For The One* are the three best Yes albums. Because we were all bringing music that was perfectly suited to Yes – and no good for anything else," he says with a laugh.

That said, Yes were a bit much for the Northolt mothers. "My mum didn't get it at all. *Close To The Edge*? 'Ooh, it's a bit long, dear.' My dad got it. But he said: 'I can see what you're trying to do, son… But I've no idea how you're going to get there.'"

But Wakeman was soon thinking beyond Yes. His second solo album, *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII*, went Top 10 in 1973; *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*, his lavish interpretation of Jules Verne's sci-fi novel, reached No.1 the following summer. These days no BBC4 documentary about the 'golden age of rock' is complete without a clip of Wakeman in his cape, eyes closed, working his *Doctor Who*-style keyboard console while an orchestra parps away behind him.

For Wakeman, though, it had to be the London Symphony Orchestra. Just like it had to be biggest inflatable dinosaurs in the lake in front of the stage for his summer '74 performance of *Journey* at Crystal Palace Bowl. One of the monsters sprung a leak, and "farted its way through the entire performance", as if to confirm the increasingly windy nature of some prog rock.

Then it all started to go wrong. The day after playing Crystal Palace, Wakeman was rushed to hospital. He'd had not one but two heart attacks. "I was twenty-five years old," he says, "which was ridiculously young."



We're gonna need a bigger bus… The cast, crew and band members for Wakeman's *King Arthur On Ice* stage show in London in May 1975.

GETTY X3 BOWIE: REX FEATURES

Blond ambition: Wakeman in his 70s prime.

Neil Crossland at Stagewear Unlimited.

It was cigarettes, booze and overworking that did it. A pattern was already developing. Wakeman's current workaholism makes sense when you learn that he wrote some of his 1975 album *The Myths And Legends Of King Arthur* while recuperating in hospital. His dad's earlier assessment – "I can see what you're trying to do, son… But I've no idea how you're going to get there" – could also have applied to Wakeman's infamous performance of *Arthur* on ice at London's Wembley Arena. With its DIY castle and pantomime horses, it's now regarded as the ultimate 70s rock folly. Wakeman sees the humour in it, but he adores the music. "We're re-recording *King Arthur* now," he reveals, "and it's been funded by [online direct-to-fan music platform] PledgeMusic. Cos otherwise it would have cost us a bloody fortune."

The interactive nature of the project has been a revelation to him. "You get feedback," he marvels, "and people are not shy. 'Can I come to a rehearsal?' 'Can you do the vocal version of *Merlin The Magician?*' It's like buying a ticket for a football match and getting to go in the players' lounge as well. People expect more for their money, and if they don't like it they will let you know."

> **"David Bowie was the biggest influence and encouragement I could ever have wished for."**

Wakeman quit Yes the first time in 1974, because he thought they were disappearing up their own fundament with the impenetrable concept album *Tales From Topographic Oceans*. At the time, Yes were huge. He could have stuck it out and become a millionaire. In 1979 he quit Yes a second time, only to see them enjoy their biggest hit ever with 1983's *Owner Of A Lonely Heart*. But, like his refusal to cash in with an album of Bowie covers, Wakeman walked away because the music didn't feel right. "Yes had all stopped singing from the same hymn sheet.

"This is why David Bowie was so good," he stresses. "When I first put together my own band [the English Rock Ensemble in the mid-70s] I didn't just take a leaf, I took… the whole *tree* out of David's book. David knew what he wanted, but he let his musicians be themselves."

Wakeman's belief in the music above all else has sometimes been his undoing. He remortgaged his house to help fund *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth* in the 70s, then lost "a small fortune" on the subsequent US tour. By 1977, punk and new wave were in vogue, Wakeman's album sales were dwindling, and his extravagant spending left him £350,000 in the hole at the end of an undersold tour. Something had to change.

The 1980s were a funny old time for Rick Wakeman. His music was desperately unfashionable, and his Orwellian concept album *1984* was his last to make the Top 40.

Bankruptcy loomed, but he stayed solvent by writing soundtracks for TV documentaries and straight-to-VHS films. He also moved to the Isle of Man, where he set up a studio, recorded new age music and befriended comedian/actor Norman Wisdom, who apparently "swore like a trooper and told the most disgusting jokes".

It was also during the 80s that Wakeman made his first TV show. In 1982, rock fans found their usual choice of *Top Of The Pops* or *The Old Grey Whistle Test* added to by Channel 4's *Gastank*, a haphazard mix of music and chat in which Wakeman played keyboards and interviewed boozy pals such as John Entwistle and Phil Lynott. It lasted one series, mainly because the station complained that "there were too many old rockers on it".

But TV has sometimes been Wakeman's salvation in between erratic solo ventures and his on-off relationship with Yes. His easy manner and way with a good yarn made him a comfortable fit for chat shows, quiz shows, any show, really. "I love doing TV," he says with a grin. "*Countdown, Watchdog, Pointless Celebrities,* done 'em all – great fun."

His 'talking head' appearances on BBC's *Grumpy Old Men* in the 2000s made him a household name in households that had never owned a Yes album. "Usually when I do a 'corporate' I get introduced as a grumpy old man rather than the bloke from Yes. But that's fine."

These days his musical career is handled by Yes's veteran ex-manager Brian Lane, and his ▷

SUITS YOU, SIR

Stagewear Unlimited: threads makers to the stars.

Neil Crossland has been in showbusiness since the age of seven. He toured in groups in the 60s before forming Stagewear Unlimited in 1975. Crossland spotted a gap in the market – and decided to fill it.

"When I was playing the clubs there was nowhere to get outfits made," he says. "You'd see a jacket you liked in a shop, but they'd only have one or two of them – and if you're playing in a group you might need four or five."

Crossland and his "team of ladies" manufacture their bespoke outfits in Stagewear's HQ in a converted church hall in a village near Doncaster in Yorkshire. They don't advertise – they don't need to, their reputation has spread by word of mouth, from the northern club circuit to comedians and game-show hosts in the 70s and 80s (Little And Large, The Grumbleweeds, Charlie Williams, Jimmy Cricket), to pop stars, including Michael Jackson and Oasis, and corporate clients including ITV, P&O Ferries and Warner holiday camps.

Rick Wakeman discovered Stagewear Unlimited 20 years ago, through former Coronation Street actor Johnny Leeze. "Rick liked Johnny's jacket and he passed my number on," Crossland explains.

Wakeman had been booked to host the TV comedy show *Live From Jongleur's,* and needed a different jacket for every show. Since then Stagewear Unlimited have met most of his sartorial needs. "He reckons I've made him eighty-two jackets and half-a-dozen capes," says Crossland. Is Rick a difficult customer? "Not at all," he says, laughing. "The great thing about Rick Wakeman is any stupid jacket, he'll wear it. Rick will wear anything."

FUTURE

"Two sleeves, please, one on each side..."

***Earth*lings: the summer '74 performance of *Journey* at Crystal Palace Bowl.**

GETTY x2

At Wembley Arena on the *Union* tour, 1991: (l-r) Chris Squire, Tony Kaye, Wakeman, Alan White, Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin, Bill Bruford, Steve Howe

corporate engagements by his agent, one-time TV ventriloquist Roger De Courcey of Nookie Bear fame. Wakeman seems comfortable in both worlds.

Although he still talks like he's propping up the bar of a Home Counties boozer with real ale on tap and a horseshoe over the door, he's now teetotal. "I stopped smoking in seventy-nine and drinking in eighty-five," he says. "I didn't have any choice in the matter. I was going to die otherwise. My only saving grace is I never took drugs. I knew that if I smoked even a bit of grass it would only end one way. It goes back to what I said earlier – 'Forget Grade Four, why can't I just jump to Grade Eight?'"

How bad did it get? "When I smoked I smoked eighty a day, when I drank it was a whole bottle of port or brandy…" His voice trails off. "I have an excessive personality. Cars? Can't have one, had to have twenty-two. Keyboards? Can't have two, had to have twenty-two. Wives? I've had four."

Wakeman had been through two marriages before tying the knot with his third wife, former *Sun* Page 3 girl Nina Carter, in 1984. Their marriage lasted until 2004. He's been married to freelance writer Rachel Kaufman since 2011, and the couple now live in an old millhouse in Norfolk. "And yes, she does get on my case about working too much," he says quietly.

His excessive traits also spread to Yes – the band he's left five times. After quitting for the fourth time, in 1998, Wakeman began another solo project, *Return To The Centre Of The Earth*. But the workload proved too much – again. "My medical history ain't great," he deadpans. "I don't have things like in-growing toenails, I have things like being told I have forty-eight hours to live." Wakeman was in his studio on the Isle of Man when the problems began. "I had a deadline to meet. I'd had a month of working all day, falling asleep, waking up at the desk, eating a bowl of soup and starting all over again."

In the middle of all this he flew to Los Angeles to oversee *Star Trek* actor Patrick Stewart's narration on the album: "I felt ill on the plane. Patrick did his recording, and then I flew back, no sleep, and felt even worse. I got home Friday night and went to bed."

Realising he needed a break, Wakeman took the Saturday off to play golf. "I don't remember much after arriving at the club," he winces, "only being stretchered into the ambulance and thinking: 'I don't like this. I can't breathe.'"

He was diagnosed with several critical ailments, including double pneumonia and pleurisy. He was put into an induced coma. When he woke up it was Tuesday. "They'd stuck an oxygen mask on me, so I had some idea where I was. But I looked at the end of the bed and five of my kids were there." That surprised him, as his eldest sons lived in England and their younger half-brother in Switzerland. "I remember thinking: 'Fuck! I must be ill.'"

> **"Countdown, *Watchdog*, *Pointless Celebrities*, done 'em all – great fun."**

Wakeman's eldest son, Oliver, later revealed that they'd all had calls from the hospital. "Basically saying: 'Come now, because your father might not make the week.'"

Rick shrugs. "But I did. And I'm still here."

It seems Wakeman has been cramming as much as he can into his life since that narrow escape. He recently came to the end of his second year as King Rat of The Grand Order Of Water Rats, a charitable fraternity of musicians, actors and sportsmen. "It's the oldest entertainment order in the world," he explains. "It's been going 127 years. But you can't say: 'I want to be a Water Rat,' you have to be invited."

Wakeman received an initial approach after he'd played a solo show in Hemel Hempstead in the late 80s. "There was a knock on the dressing-room door and it was Frankie Vaughan," he recalls with a chuckle. The old song-and-dance man of *Give Me The Moonlight Give Me The Girl* fame was not Wakeman's target demographic. "I said: 'I wouldn't have thought this was your cup of tea, Frankie'."

It wasn't. But Vaughan invited Wakeman for lunch. It was the beginning of a lengthy vetting process. After their third date, Vaughan asked whether Rick was interested in joining the Order. He told them he was. "And four years later I received a letter of invitation. I was initiated on the same day as Joe Pasquale."

Previously, the Order had been rather light on rock musicians. Less so now. "Brian May's a Rat," says Wakeman. "So is Gordon Giltrap. And Nicko McBrain. Nicko's a very proud Rat."

But after two years as King Rat, Wakeman declined a third term. The workload was too much. Will he ever slow down, you wonder?

"I am aware that I am going to be sixty-seven this year. And it feels like it sometimes," he says, pulling a pained expression. "But I'm still up at the crack of dawn and I work every day. I took four days off earlier this year, and that's the first holiday Rachel and I have had in eight years. She's still wondering when we're going to have our honeymoon."

Not any time soon, if Rick's diary is anything to go by. He's currently emailing music back and forth with Jon Anderson and Trevor Rabin ("When my engineer heard it he immediately said: 'That sounds like Yes'"). The trio are due to tour soon with an as-yet unnamed drummer. Before then, though, there are orchestral scores to be finished for the *King Arthur* show. Wakeman is bracing himself for 18-hour working days, but promises he'll remember to sleep and eat this time.

"If I'm brutally honest, that's when I'm at my happiest – on stage," he says. "Walking out there knowing all the pieces of the jigsaw are in place, and you can finally see the big picture." He looks knackered, but happy.

Surrounded by photographs of singers, actors, comedians and one Hollywood hearthrob's disembodied head, Rick Wakeman couldn't be in better company. As he drives off to Sheffield for that after-dinner engagement, it's clear he lives for that old truism: the show must go on. After all, it's in his blood.

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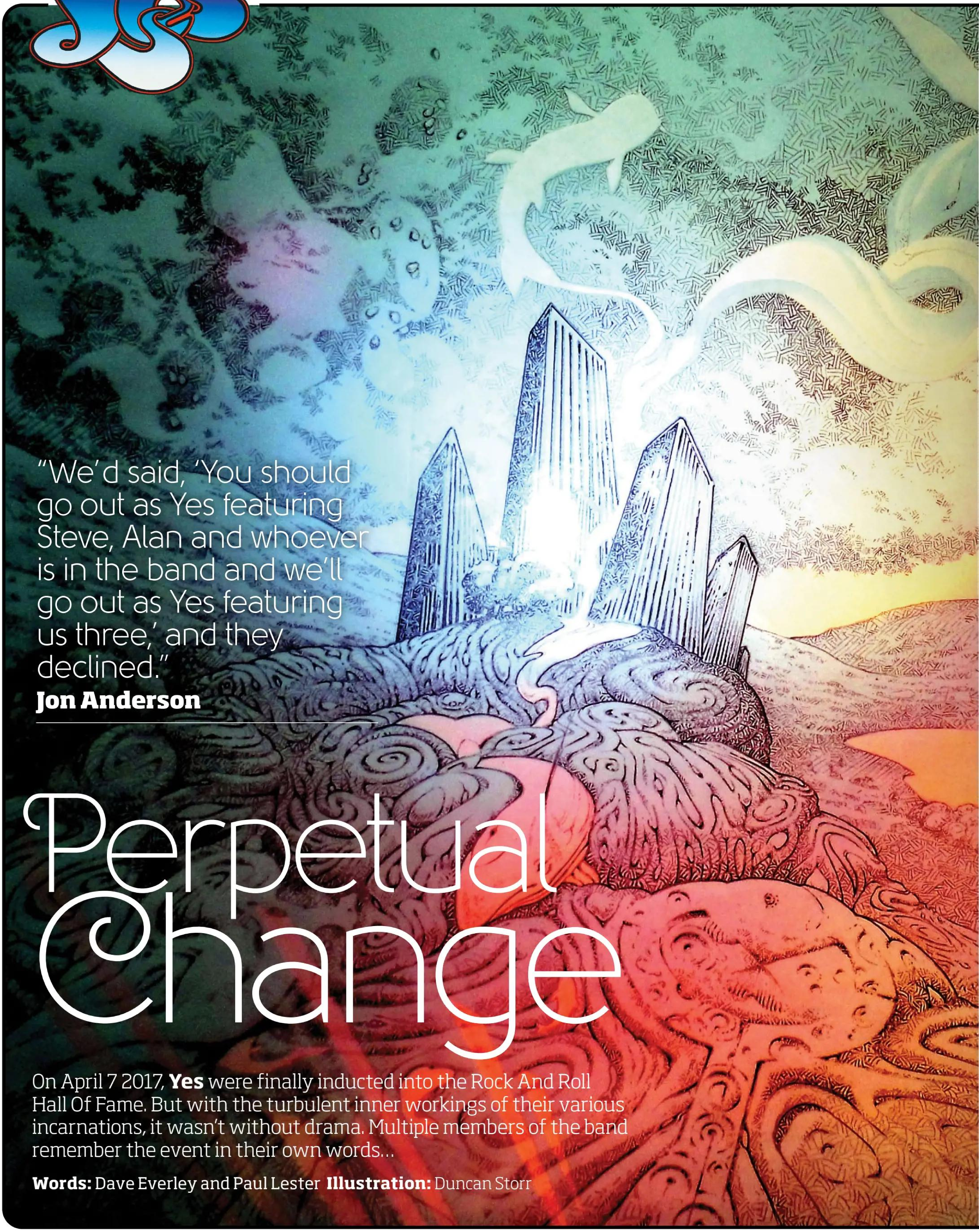


> "We'd said, 'You should go out as Yes featuring Steve, Alan and whoever is in the band and we'll go out as Yes featuring us three,' and they declined."
>
> **Jon Anderson**

Perpetual Change

On April 7 2017, **Yes** were finally inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. But with the turbulent inner workings of their various incarnations, it wasn't without drama. Multiple members of the band remember the event in their own words…

Words: Dave Everley and Paul Lester **Illustration:** Duncan Storr

Since it was established in 1983 by *Rolling Stone* magazine founder Jann Wenner, the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame has largely kept progressive rock at arm's length. The organisers' sniffiness has meant that just a handful of prog bands and artists have been inducted over the years: Frank Zappa (1995), Pink Floyd (1996), Genesis (2010), Rush (2013) and Peter Gabriel (2014).

There are some glaring omissions – King Crimson, ELP, Jethro Tull – but one name stands out: Yes. As one of the genre's founding fathers and band who did more than any to popularise prog, their absence was grating.

All that changed this year when the band were finally accepted into the Hall Of Fame via a public vote. Controversially, the institution's complex rule system meant that of the 17 people who have officially passed through the band's ranks, just eight were eligible: Jon Anderson, Steve Howe (who was interviewed for this piece, but subsequently asked for his quotes not be used), Trevor Rabin, Bill Bruford, Alan White, Tony Kaye, Rick Wakeman, and, posthumously, Chris Squire. That meant no place for founding guitarist Peter Banks, vocalist/producer Trevor Horn or current members Geoff Downes, Billy Sherwood or Jon Davison.

The issue was clouded further by the fact that there are two incarnations of Yes in existence – the Yes led by Howe and Alan White, and the version featuring Anderson, Rabin and Wakeman called, until recently, ARW.

The Hall Of Fame was a chance for both halves to come together and potentially settle their differences. As with most things involving Yes, the reality proved to be more complicated…

JON ANDERSON: It started about 15 years ago, when I was on tour with Yes. Management at the time kept saying, "We're going to get you in the Hall Of Fame." I said, "[Shrugging] OK…" And this went on for about four years, and I said, "Forget about it – don't even talk about the Hall Of Fame until it happens." Of course, it took its time.

RICK WAKEMAN: There have been so many musicians that deserved induction and were dead before it happened. Jon Lord is an example – Deep Purple got in so late. And when Yes suddenly get inducted, and Chris had died the year before – the only solid guy throughout the entire history of Yes – that made me angry. I said, "I'm not going. I feel that's an insult." Then I got the message back that they were going to induct him posthumously. Then I went, "OK. If you do that then I'll turn up."

GEOFF DOWNES: Was I unhappy about not being inducted? No. Had it been maybe two or three years ago when Chris was alive, I'm sure myself and Patrick [Moraz] and a number of others – maybe Trevor Horn – would have been inducted. But I'm not upset.

BILLY SHERWOOD: It's no secret that Yes is political as hell – it's always been that way. It seems to be that's one of the things that drives the engine. It should be a reality TV show.

The current and past members of Yes convened in New York the day before the induction ceremony. Given the band's turbulent history and the sometimes strained personal relationships, there was the potential for tension between the two camps.

JON ANDERSON: We met the night before. We were staying in the same hotel as the other Yes. There were smiles and "Hi!"s and things like that.

RICK WAKEMAN: Were we cordial? Depends what you mean by cordial. Did we laugh and joke and muck around? No. Were we polite to each other? Yes.

ALAN WHITE: I basically haven't fallen out with anybody, I don't think. We were talking together in different ways. I think we just got on with, it was something we got to do together, and I felt good about the evening.

RICK WAKEMAN: It was nice to see Alan, who had been really ill. It was nice to chat with him. Then you get into the real nitty gritty of getting together to rehearse…

JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC/GETTY IMAGES

Above: Jon Anderson playing at the induction with Geddy Lee of Rush on bass.

TREVOR RABIN: The sad thing is that there were really no real rehearsals. There was a lot of posturing and crap going on, and I could have done without all that stuff.

JON ANDERSON: Steve wasn't the most – what's the word? – affable person. He can be a little bit stubborn. So I went over and shook his hand: "How you doing Steve?" And he was, like, [reserved] "Hello." OK, I'll just get on with it and have fun…

The induction ceremony itself took place on April 7 at the 19,000-capacity Barclays Centre in Brooklyn, New York. Other inductees included Pearl Jam, Journey, ELO, Joan Baez and rapper Tupac Shakur, but the eyes of all prog fans were on Yes.

GEDDY LEE (INDUCTION SPEECH): It's not overstating things to say [Yes] changed the way I played and listened to music forever. So here we are, decades later, and the music of Yes is still echoing down through the years, showing me that music truly is a continuum.

GEOFF DOWNES: I liked Rush's induction speech. When Geddy Lee was inducted [in 2013] he said he thought it should have been Yes.

JON ANDERSON: I was so nervous. I'm generally not nervous onstage at all, but when I got onstage to speak my nerves kicked in. I was in a state, actually. All I wanted to do was get up and sing.

STEVE HOWE (ACCEPTANCE SPEECH): Fame is fickle for many people, and some may long to bask in its glory. Others merely attempt to gain notoriety for their musical endeavors. Well, since music speaks long after its creation, this service has a payment for those with the respect for those who are no longer with us today. Allowing those to remain, to shine a light on all those who contributed to those such great ideas and melodies and lyrics and arrangements and direction with this Yes music.

BILLY SHERWOOD: I thought Steve's speech was really eloquent. I thought he spoke the most about what the essence of Yes really was.

ALAN WHITE: Steve is a little bit more serious about Yes music. With his guitar, he's almost religious about it. Rick's speech? It depends whether you want to listen to music or dirty jokes…

While the rest of the band members gave speeches that were heartfelt and respectful, Wakeman launched into a stand-up comedy routine that included gags about wanking, erectile dysfunction and prostate examinations.

RICK WAKEMAN: Joan Baez's speech was great, and it was lovely to see Jeff Lynne and Roy Wood together. And then it all started to get a bit boring. I looked around and nobody was listening. Everybody was talking and drinking champagne. I thought, "This is ridiculous."

JON ANDERSON: I said to Rick, "Are you going to tell any jokes?" And he said, "I don't know, it's such a big audience, it might not go down well."

RICK WAKEMAN: It was actually our manager and agent who went, "Go on" at the table. And we got on the stage and Trev went, "Go for it." So I thought, "Sod it" and went for it.

JON ANDERSON: Rick started off and the audience were going bananas. Why not have humour? It's called fun.

JON DAVISON: Rick's speech had everyone cracking up. We were all at our banquet tables and not really expecting that, it threw everyone for a loop. He had some startling references. It was obvious he was making a statement.

KEVIN KANE/WIREIMAGE FOR ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME/GETTY IMAGES

MEDIAPUNCH/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Top: Steve Howe and Trevor Rabin playing *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* at the induction.

Above, Yes L-R: Steve Howe, Alan White, Jon Anderson, Bill Bruford, Rick Wakeman and Trevor Rabin.

ALAN WHITE: Obviously it's going to appeal to certain people, whereas certain stalwart fans didn't like the fact that he did that amongst all the serious Yes music.

BILLY SHERWOOD: Oh boy. I would have really liked to hear more about Yes, to be honest.

Not everyone in Yes loved Wakeman's speech. In a subsequently deleted blog post, Geoff Downes accused Rick Wakeman of "making a prick of himself", while Billy Sherwood criticised the keyboard player for not leaving time for Chris Squire's widow Scotty, who had joined the band onstage, to speak.

RICK WAKEMAN: That was totally not true. They programme who can speak and who can't. And the programme for who could speak was Jon and Trevor, Steve, Alan and myself. Bill [Bruford] was not programmed to speak. But we wanted Scotty onstage with us, and if you listen at the end I did craftily try to get her up to the mic. I said, "Welcome Chris' wife Scotty…", but the Hall Of Fame weren't having any of it. So unfortunately that's a classic example of somebody not knowing facts.

BILLY SHERWOOD: I made a personal comment which sometimes I like to do. But it wasn't nasty or anything about anybody's skill-set or personality. I just said what I felt: that I'd have liked to have heard more about Chris and Yes.

GEOFF DOWNES: I thought maybe Chris should have had more of a mention in there. But these things are spur of the moment. People maybe just forgot about saying anything important about him. That's the only thing I was disappointed about. Chris being such an essential part of Yes – he was not really honoured in as equal a way as some of the other people.

JON DAVISON: We're trying to take the high road. They've taken a lot of public stabs at us. We've tried to maintain some dignity, and of course that weekend everybody was together and emotions were running high. I think Geoff and Billy flipped a bit there, but they were apologetic to the fans about that. We quickly removed those statements and we're trying to move forward.

JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC/GETTY IMAGES

Top right: Rick performing at the induction to *most* peoples' amusment...

Yes put aside their issues for a two-song performance that saw Anderson, Wakeman, Howe and White sharing a stage for the first time since 2004. For *Roundabout*, they were joined on bass by Geddy Lee, while *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* saw Steve Howe swapping his guitar for four strings and ended with Rick Wakeman strapping on a key-tar.

TREVOR RABIN: It was a little weird, but some of those guys are not the guys we worked with. So it was a bit contrived, musically.

GEOFF DOWNES: I thought the band played well, it was good to see Alan back up there cos he had his back surgery some time ago and he seems to be getting back on course. Seeing Steve play bass on *Owner...* was pretty interesting – he plays very good bass actually. It was a nice event.

TREVOR RABIN: It was trying to glue two different elements together. And the glue wasn't sticking very well. I think it would have been great if we'd all got there with the right vibe and really rehearsed properly.

JON ANDERSON: We wanted Lee Pomeroy to play bass on *Owner*. It's funny, he wasn't allowed to because he was already playing for ELO that night. So Steve said, "I'll play bass." "Oh, OK, that's cool..."

GEOFF DOWNES: I think it would have been nice if Billy [Sherwood] had played; he was up for doing it. He's a very talented guy and it was Chris' wish that he continued with the band. But I understand the reasons that prohibited him.

BILLY SHERWOOD: There was a question about me playing bass but it didn't work out and I'm cool with that. I was happy just to be a part of the event.

Inevitably, that wasn't the end of the matter. Two days after the Hall Of Fame induction, the ARW camp announced they were changing their name to Yes Featuring Jon Anderson, Trevor Rabin and Rick Wakeman, meaning there are now two bands trading under the Yes name.

JON ANDERSON: There was a lot of talk about going out as Yes when we started, but I said, "I don't want to confuse anybody. We'll go out as ARW to find out who we are musically and how it's going to work."

TREVOR RABIN: After the very first tour, management started saying, "We are inundated with people saying why are you playing all the Yes stuff but you don't call yourself Yes? Jon was the guy who started the band."

JON ANDERSON: I do get a lot of mail on my Facebook page: "I went to see Yes and you're not there any more." That's been going on for years now. Yesterday I was shopping and somebody came up and said, "So you're touring with Todd Rundgren?" And I said, "No, that's not me, that's the others."

RICK WAKEMAN: People get confused as to which is which. At concerts, fans hold up signs saying, "You are Yes." We had the same thing with ABWH.

JON ANDERSON: You should not confuse the fans. You should say who you are. We'd said, "You should go out as Yes featuring Steve, Alan and whoever is in the band and we'll go out as Yes featuring us three," and they declined. That was before the actual Hall Of Fame.

GEOFF DOWNES: They're perfectly entitled to call themselves whatever they want to call themselves. We're focusing on what we're doing and that's all we can do. We wish them well. We've got no axe to grind. We hope they succeed. They may have something against us. If they do that's their problem, not ours.

JON ANDERSON: Would the two parties come together? Your guess is as good as mine. If it's going to happen, it'll happen, and it should happen in the best of ways. If the band went out and said who they are and not fool the public, life would be much easier for them.

TREVOR RABIN: I can only speak for myself, but I have personally no interest in it. You'd have to ask Jon or Rick, but I certainly wouldn't.

RICK WAKEMAN: There's too much water under the bridge. There's a lot of issues that will never be made public because there's no point. Do I ever see a rapprochement? Absolutely not. I can bet my life on it.

What happens next is anyone's guess. While both parties are legally entitled to use the Yes name, the band's fractious history would suggest there may be stormy waters ahead.

RICK WAKEMAN: There's a couple of Bucks Fizzes out there. I think there's about 826 Drifters. There's nothing wrong with two Yeses.

ALAN WHITE: The internal politics with the band are such that we're both allowed to use the name really so... that's the reason we're going ahead and doing this. I'm just carrying on what I started doing 45 years ago.

RICK WAKEMAN: I've always said all along, I don't care what they do. They're fully entitled to do whatever they like. It makes no difference to me. I have no idea what they're doing, where they're playing. It's of no interest to me. Why would I look at them and go, "Oh, it's a rival band out there"? They're not a rival band. They're another lot out there playing Yes music, same as we are. We're just doing it our way and we're very happy with what we're doing, so why the hell should I worry about it? Good luck to them.

BILLY SHERWOOD: Would I go see them if they came to town? I would if I was free! Sure. I'm a Yes fan. In 2017, the more Yes, the merrier. As long as it's done with integrity and the delivery system is sound, no harm done.

JON ANDERSON: Somewhere, Chris Squire is having a good laugh at all this! He's loving every moment! ℗

"Yes suddenly get inducted, and Chris had died the year before; that made me angry. I said, 'I'm not going. I feel that's an insult.'"

Rick Wakeman

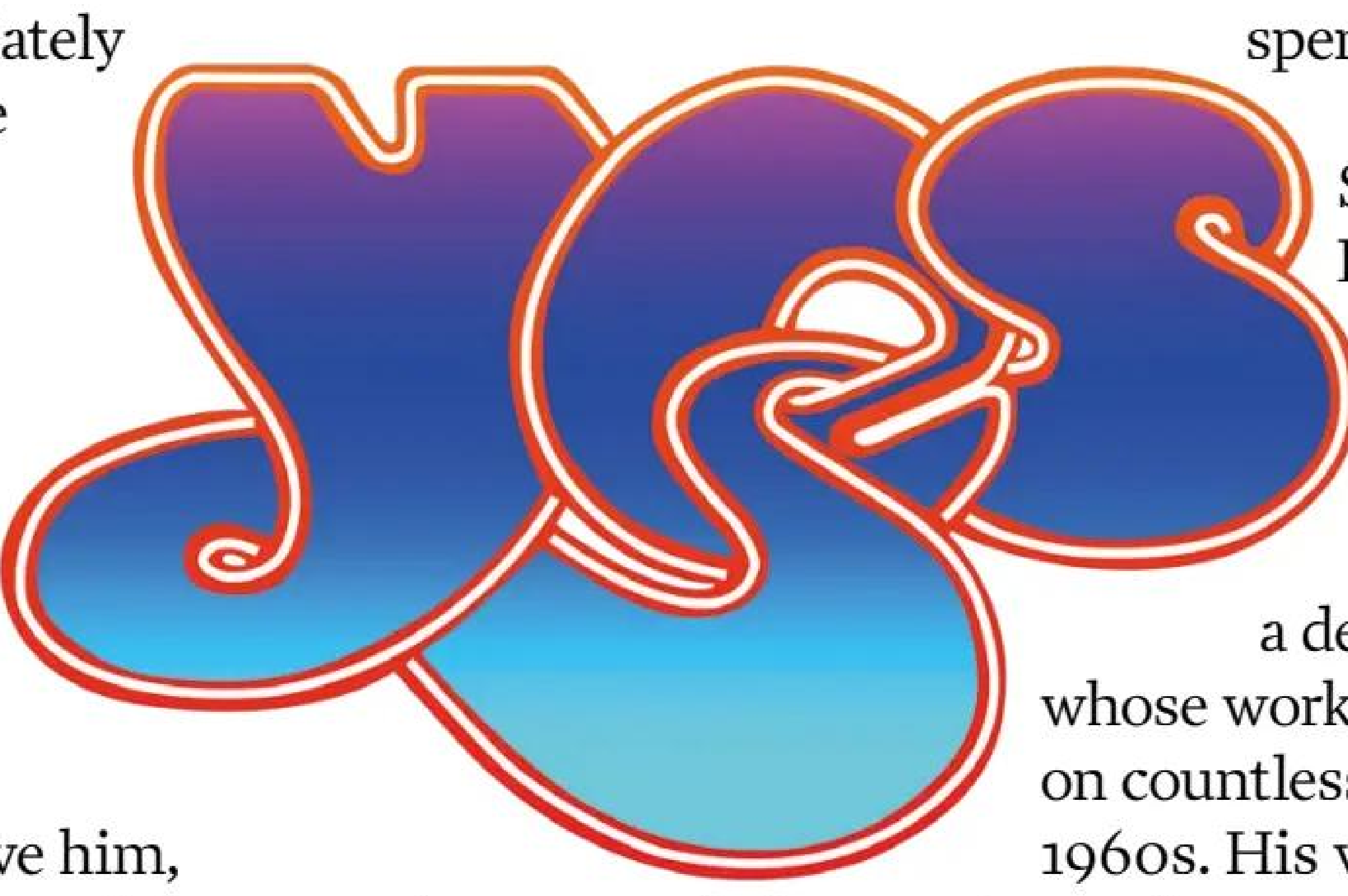
The Silence Of The Valley

He's the artist whose otherworldly visions have became synonymous with Yes, but **Roger Dean**'s career had humble beginnings. *Prog* finds out the stories behind his most iconic album covers and discovers which of them **Yes** guitarist Steve Howe has hanging on his living room wall.

Words: Sid Smith **Portraits:** Will Ireland **Artwork:** Roger Dean

A young boy is climbing a steep hill at night. Carefully, he makes his way through the tangles of sparse scrub that cling to the side of Lion Rock; from his vantage point he can see Kowloon spread before him, the name of which comes from the term for nine dragons. Immediately below, the very last house of the accommodation reserved for British army personnel in Hong Kong, where he lives with his parents, huddles into the mane of Lion Rock. Beneath his feet, time stands still, the passing of millions of years solidified in granite. Above him, a scattering of distant stars wink through the pearlescent glow of a glorious moonlit night.

"It was just magical," says Roger Dean with a sigh, he's clearly moved by the memory of a night that in all probability sealed within in him a desire to connect with both the built and natural environment. It's a passion that remains undiminished to this day. Leaving behind Lion Rock and the nine dragons at the age of 14, he returned to the UK in the 1950s, when the country was still dealing with the privations of post-war austerity, and fondly remembers walking in the countryside as a child. Later, as the 1960s got underway, he became a student at the Canterbury College Of Art and later still, joined the Royal College Of Art. Every available minute that wasn't engaged with filling sketchbooks with ideas, would be spent outdoors with friends.



Roger Dean is also the man behind the iconic Yes logo.

"We climbed all over Scotland and Wales and I just loved pathways and landscapes. It was burned into my soul, if you like," he recalls.

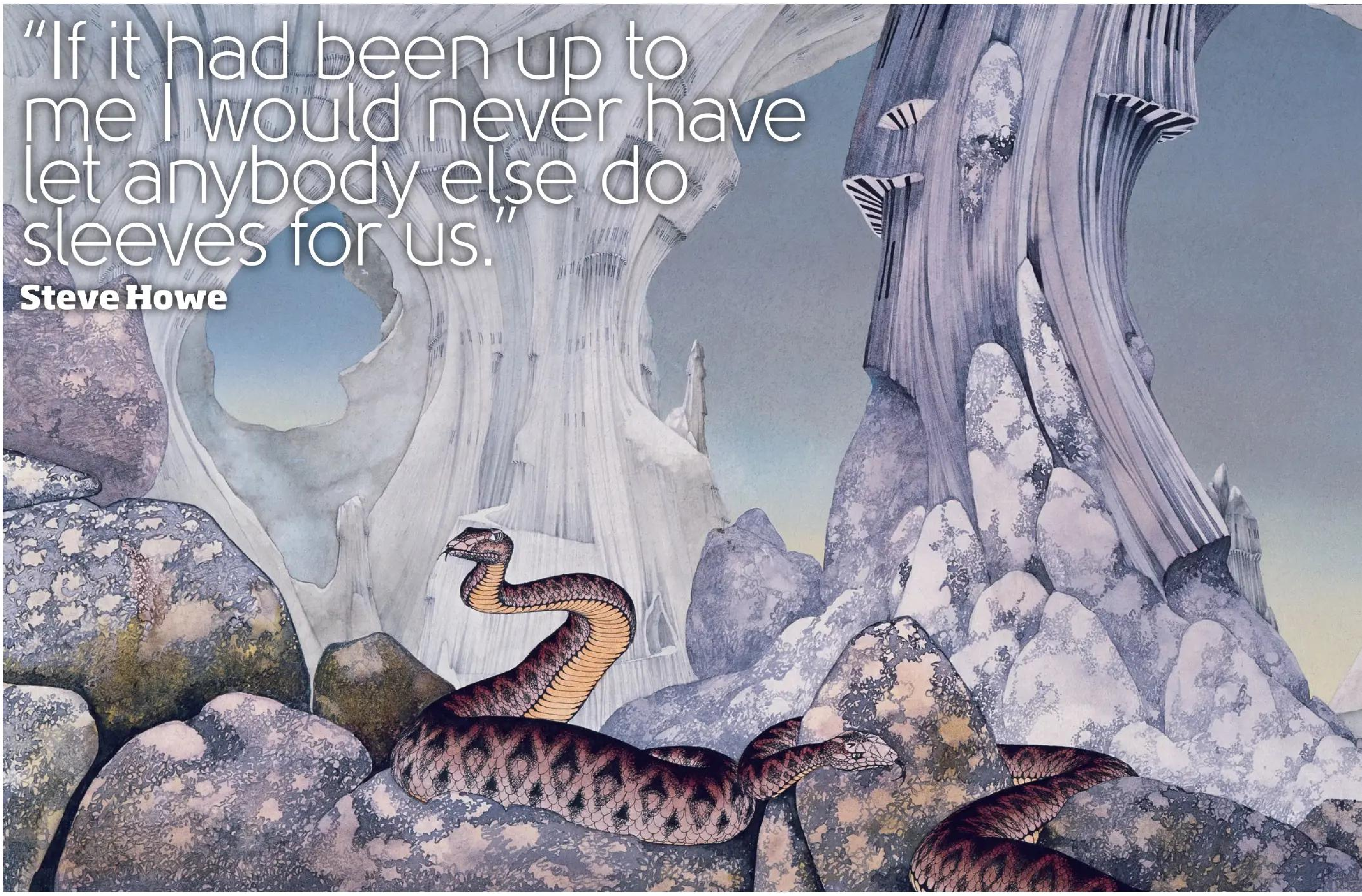
Those landscapes made a deep impression on Dean, whose work in turn has made its mark on countless music fans since the late 1960s. His visionary worlds, where magic, nature and retro-future technologies combine with a poetic yet unwritten epic narrative, have been adopted and exploited throughout elements of popular culture. For more than six decades his designs have been part of the cultural terrain, a companion to record buyers through the covers of numerous albums and bands, the most important of which – Yes – began with 1971's *Fragile*. His association has continued, with only a few interruptions, until the present day.

“I just loved pathways and landscapes. It was burned into my soul.”
Roger Dean

Roger Dean, shot exclusively for *Prog* at his art showroom at Trading Boundaries in Fletching, East Sussex, February 2020.

"If it had been up to me I would never have let anybody else do sleeves for us."

Steve Howe



©ROGER DEAN RELAYER 1974/2021

"If it had been up to me, I would never have let anybody else do sleeves for us," says Steve Howe. "But there were people in Yes at certain times who said, 'We don't want to go with Roger.' I was like, 'What?' Well, we don't do that any more. Roger is a loved, respected and admired friend."

For the Yes guitarist, Dean's work is a kind of visual extension of a world they began terraforming soon after he joined Yes in 1970. It was important, he argues, to have their records dressed in imagery that at least reflected something of the ambitious sonic worlds they were attempting to create. "When we did *The Yes Album*, I mean, that sleeve is pretty lame, isn't it? Everyone got used to it so now they kind of like it."

However, when Dean showed up, Howe recalls the impact of his work upon the group was instantaneous. "We were like, 'Now, *that* looks different.' Our music has always been unusual and trying to do something distinctive and we're proud of that. But we've also lucked out with a guy who has something definitive going on as well. Roger gave our sleeves the wow factor. There's always been a chemistry with Roger. He was touring with us last year and he'll be with us this year."

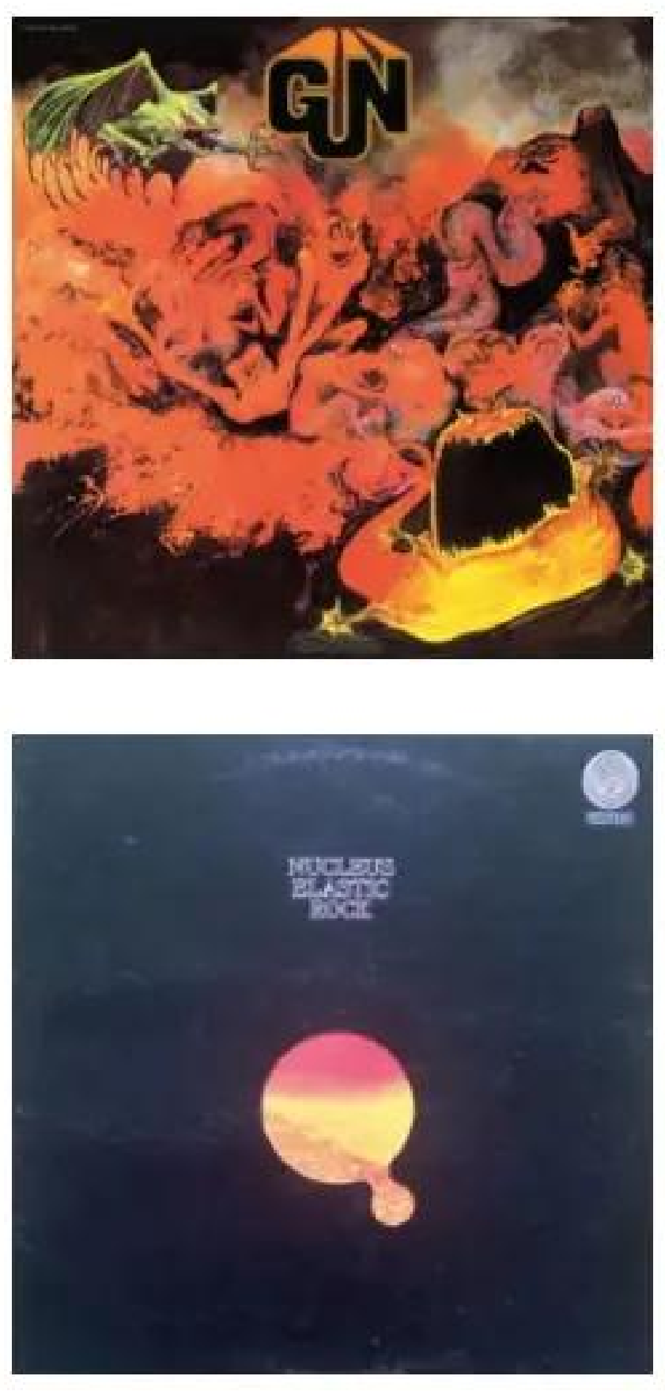
Dean has complete freedom to come up with whatever captures his imagination, says Howe. "Somebody might come forward with an idea and we will kick it about and Roger will listen. But he goes off and we don't really have any idea what he's going to come back with. Yes is so much part of his art direction, he's closely involved with us."

Occasionally that closeness can get its wires crossed says Dean, recalling the band's perplexed reaction to the completed artwork for 2014's *Heaven & Earth*. "It's not that they didn't like it but rather that they were bemused. They weren't unhappy, but it quickly became clear to me that they weren't looking at what they were expecting to be looking at," he says with a laugh.

The band asked him to explain what he had presented. "To me, the title, *Heaven & Earth* is a partial quote from *Hamlet*, where he says: 'There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.' What I wanted to achieve with the title was the idea of something massive and mysterious in some hidden place like the Arctic. Then they asked me, 'Where did you get the title *Heaven & Earth* from?' And I said, 'That's *your* title, that's the title you gave me.' And they said, 'No, we didn't! We gave you something totally different.' They may well have given me something totally different because I got it over the phone and clearly I misheard but it made enough sense to me that I went ahead with it. At the meeting, they were very bemused but they said, 'Well, let's go with it!'"

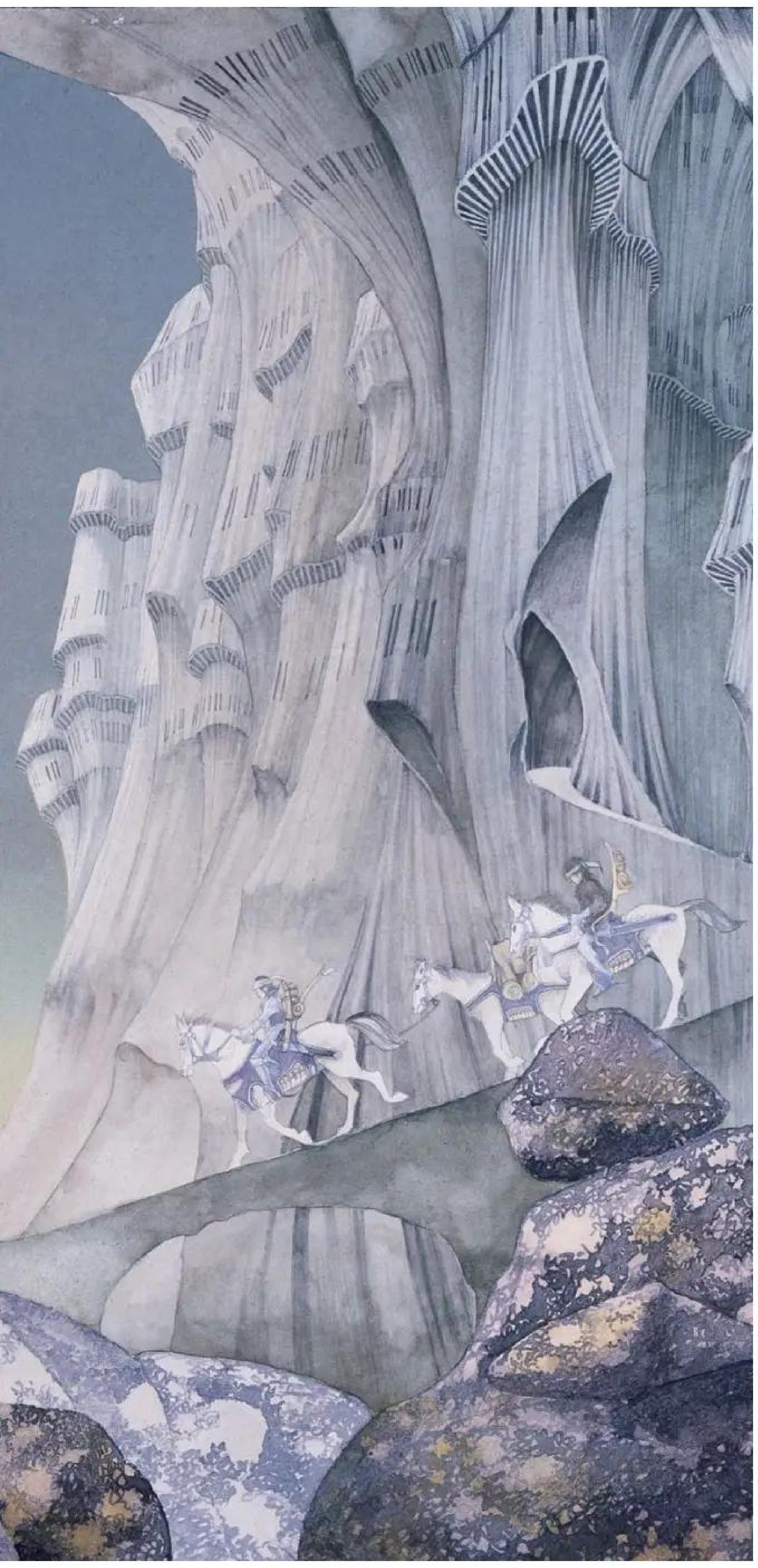
"Now *that* looks different." The gatefold artwork for *Relayer*.

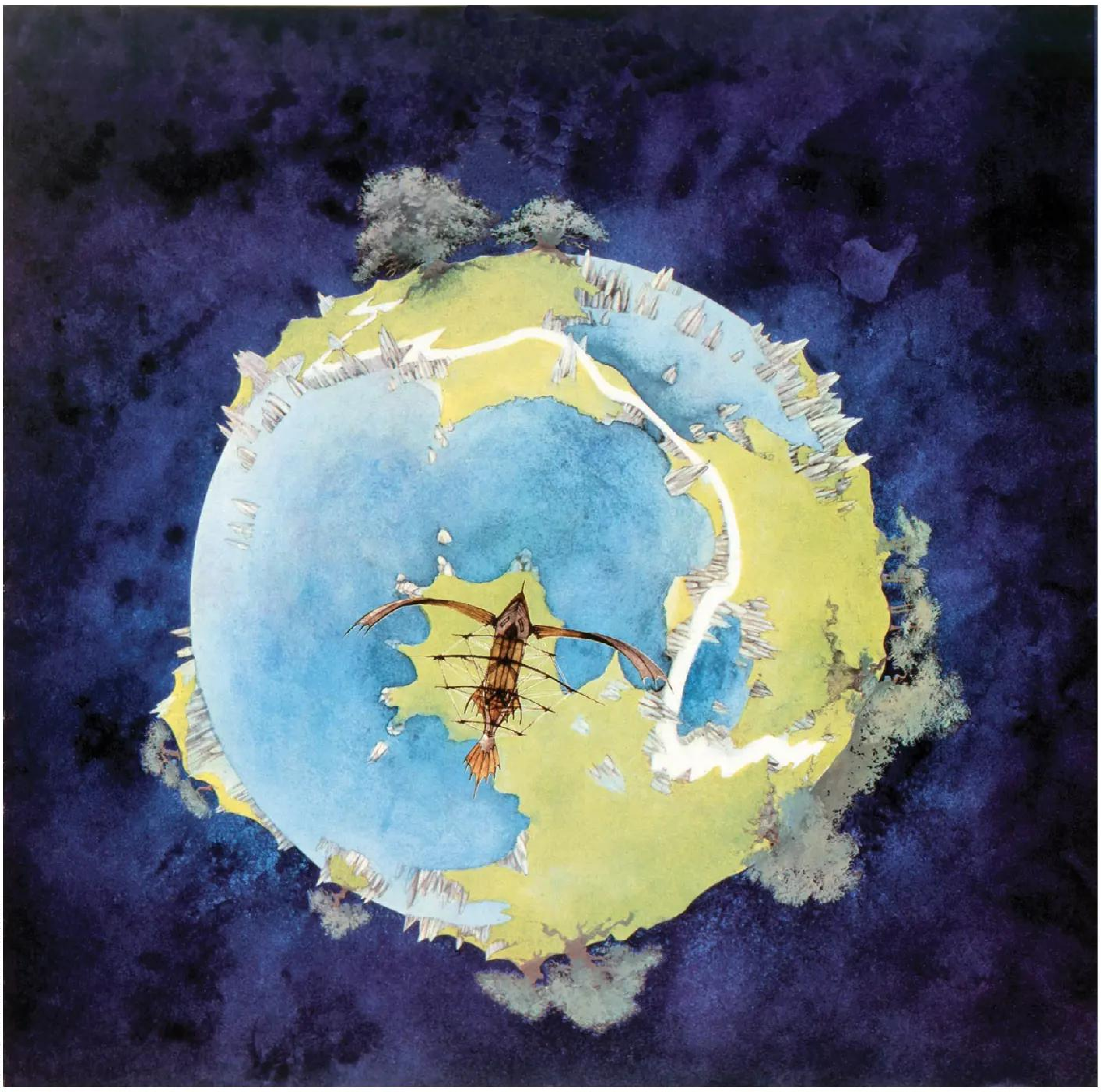
Dean's Gun and Nucleus covers.



To understand Roger Dean and his unique vision, it's important to know his long-standing ire at the rigours of conformity and modern design. When he studied industrial design at the Canterbury College Of Art, he wanted to switch to architecture but was profoundly unimpressed by the Brutalist school of architecture's dominance. "Why on earth do we design things for people that are boxes? I was told I should read Le Corbusier's *The Modulor* [series]. I read them and I thought, 'What an astonishing load of bullshit!' I used to tease architectural students and even now when I teach, I say, 'You know, architecture is a theology, a belief system with delusions of rationality.' And I could say exactly the same about graphic design. This addiction to the design with fonts like Helvetica."

The excuse for using such fonts in graphic design, he argues, is that it's thought to be clean and legible. "It doesn't look clean and modern. It looks





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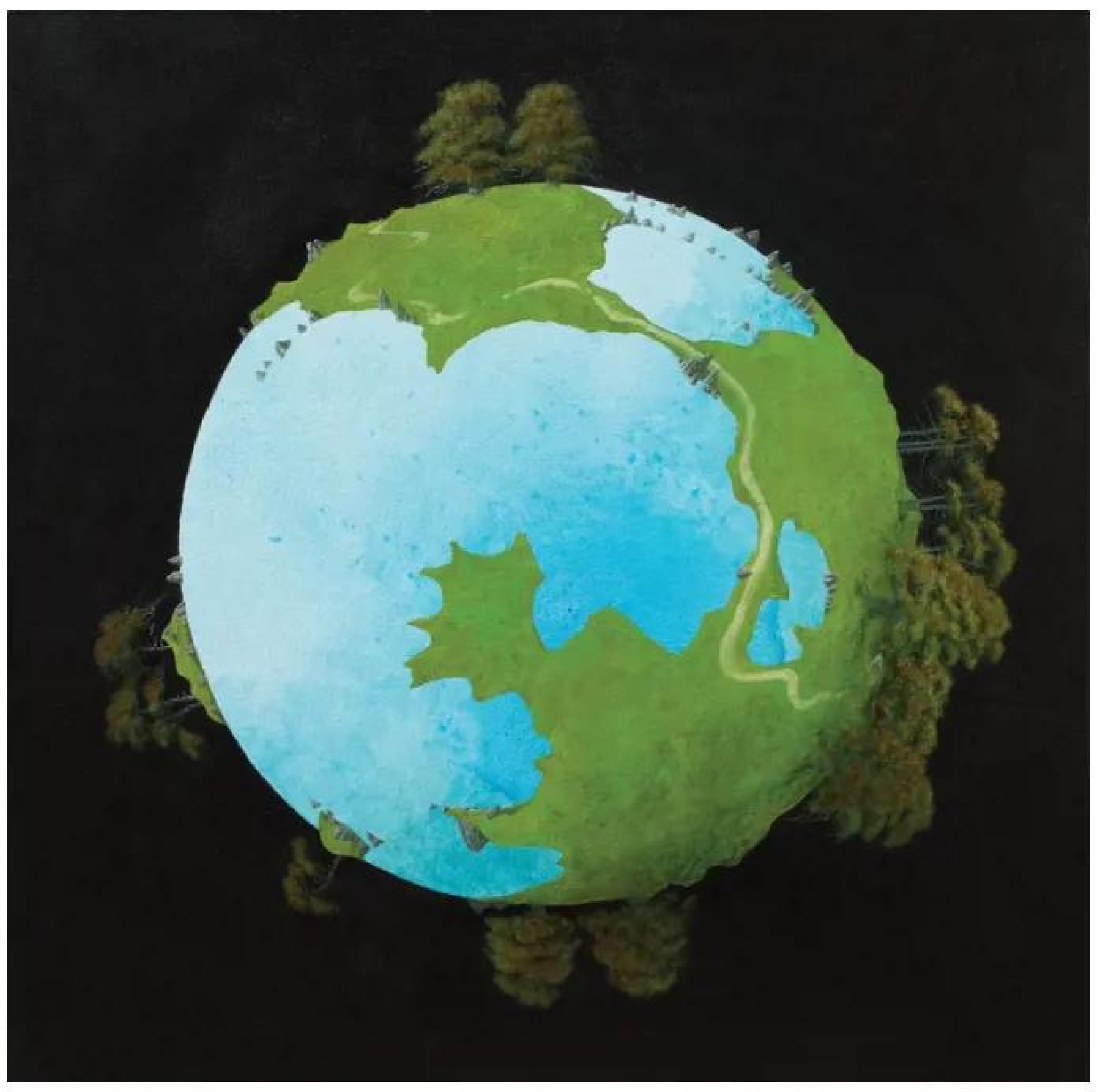

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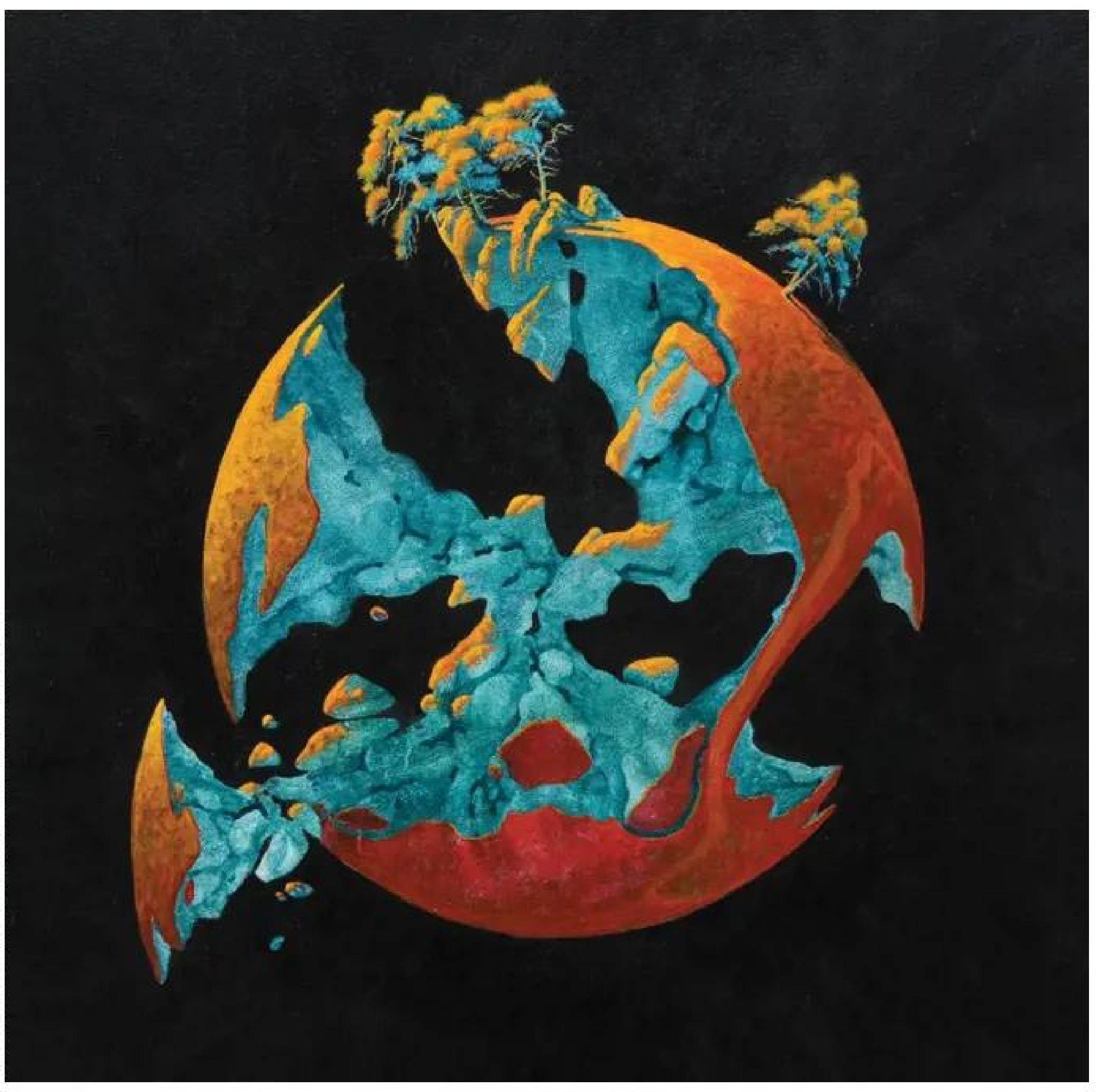

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Top: the original *Fragile* album artwork. Bottom: variation studies of the same idea.

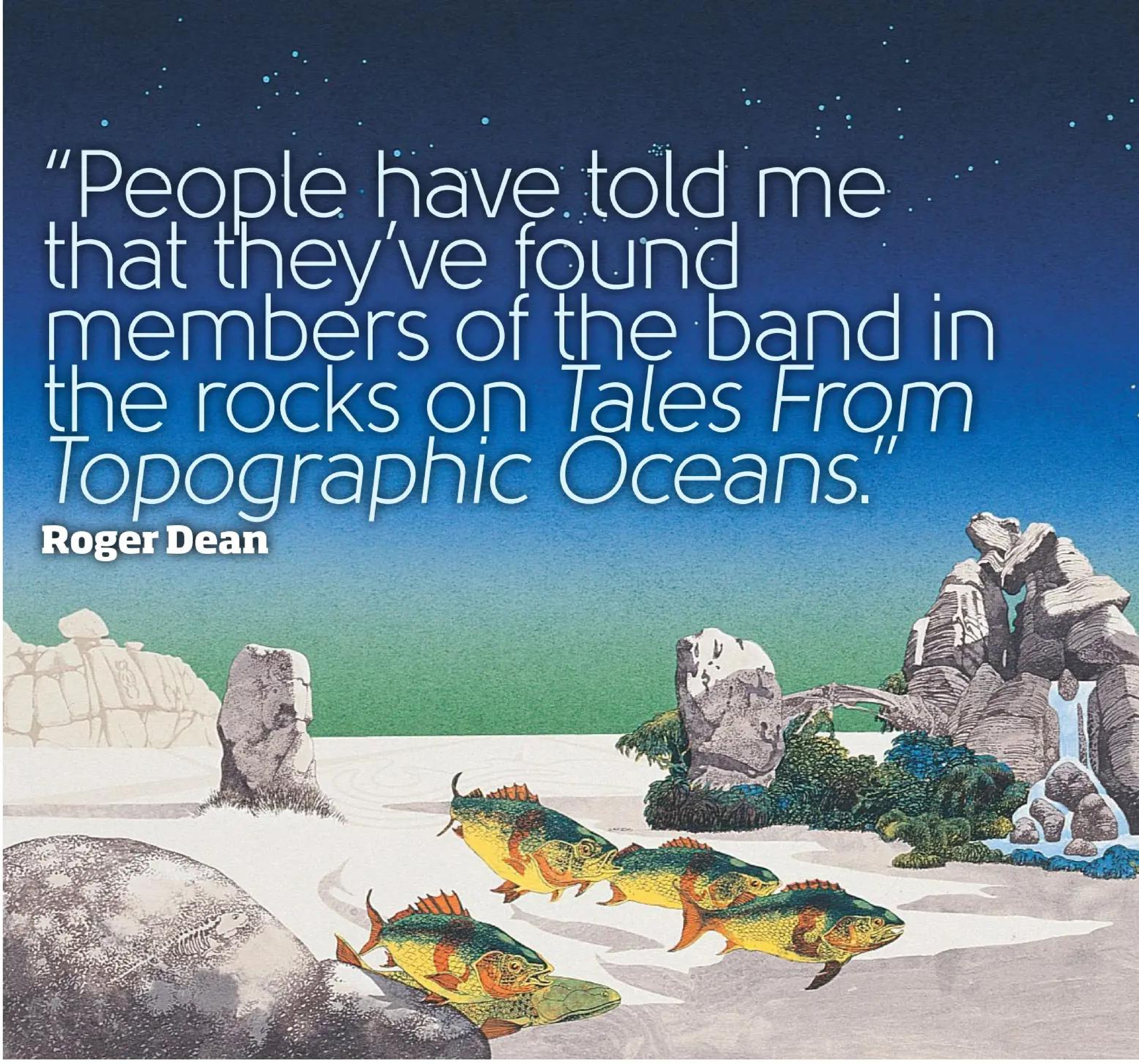
Doctor Strangely Strange's *Heavy Petting*.

boring, grey, dull and corporate," he says, his voice filled with disdain. "Graphic design was stripped to a boring minimum. I mean, I walk around stores like Waitrose and Sainsbury's, which are celebrated for their modern design. Half a century ago maybe, but they haven't changed one iota since. What's this look got to do with making things look attractive or appetising? It's just boring as hell."

Nobody could accuse Dean's work, or the handwritten script that so often accompanies it, of being corporate or boring. When Dean returned to the UK as a schoolboy, the impact of two world wars could still be felt in the way art and design were taught. "Everywhere you looked was a grey and sterile world and what was coming down the pipe — the very colourful clothes, the fantastic music, the whole Age Of Aquarius thing that was in the air at the time — brought colour and hope. On the technological side, things were equally exciting. Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* was being made when I was a student and Concorde was about to fly. As students, we went to Bristol to look at it being built, and of course, very soon after leaving college, men were walking on the moon," he says, still galvanised by witnessing first-hand these hallmarks of an intense social, political and artistic revolution. For him, it was about fulfilling one's potential rather than being boxed in.

"As a student, besides all the art and design things that fascinated me, I never really got why they were separate skills. It seemed to me I could paint like any painter, I could design like any designer, I could design graphics, I could design architecture, I could design furniture. I did all these things. And it wasn't because I had millions of different talents, it was because to me they were all one thing and something I absolutely loved and that I just did."

Dean's work first came to the attention of record buyers with the release of British rock trio Gun's 1968 self-titled debut album on CBS. In 1970, he began creating a series of striking covers for the Vertigo label, opening with a die-cut gatefold sleeve of Nucleus' *Elastic Rock*. Even more elaborately, Doctor Strangely Strange's *Heavy Petting* featured two folding flaps die-cut in three places. You might think that Dean would look back on his time with Vertigo fondly but



©ROGER DEAN TALES FROM TOPOGRAPHIC OCEANS 1973/2021

> "People have told me that they've found members of the band in the rocks on *Tales From Topographic Oceans*."
> **Roger Dean**

he wasn't entirely happy with the relationship with the label's art director, Mike Stanford, which he describes as being oddly dissonant. "I liked him by the way, quite a clever guy. He wanted radical and interesting album covers but he wouldn't let me have my head and do what I wanted. So the way he got radical and inventive album covers was through paper sculpture. I knew that whenever I had a suggestion that involved paper sculpture, it would work for him."

These days Vertigo label covers from the period have become highly prized collectors' items, changing hands for eye-watering amounts that increase exponentially if the cover has a credit to Dean.

Dissatisfied, Dean went knocking on doors asking for work, with his Royal College Of Art sketchbooks tucked under his arm. There's an old saying: 'Keep a diary, and someday it'll keep you.' One of the doors he knocked on belonged to David Howells at CBS, and he gave him a job for the little-known Afrobeat outfit Osibisa. If he regarded some of the Vertigo album sleeves as dull with not much impact to them, the airborne elephant that adorned Osibisa's 1971 album *Woyaya* certainly caught people's imagination and was a personal turning point for Dean, who was then aged 26. "I remember going down Oxford Street and seeing a record store window full of that Osibisa cover. On the strength of that, the people at the Big O Posters company gave me a contract to do posters and that really changed my career."

However, the truly life-changing moment came that same year when Phil Carson, the senior vice president at Atlantic Records, peered inside Dean's RCA sketchbook. Though enthused by what he saw, he told Dean that he only had two bands – Led Zeppelin and Yes – and when one of them needed a cover he'd give Dean a ring. When the call came it took him to Advision Studios to meet up with the members of Yes, who were recording *Fragile*.

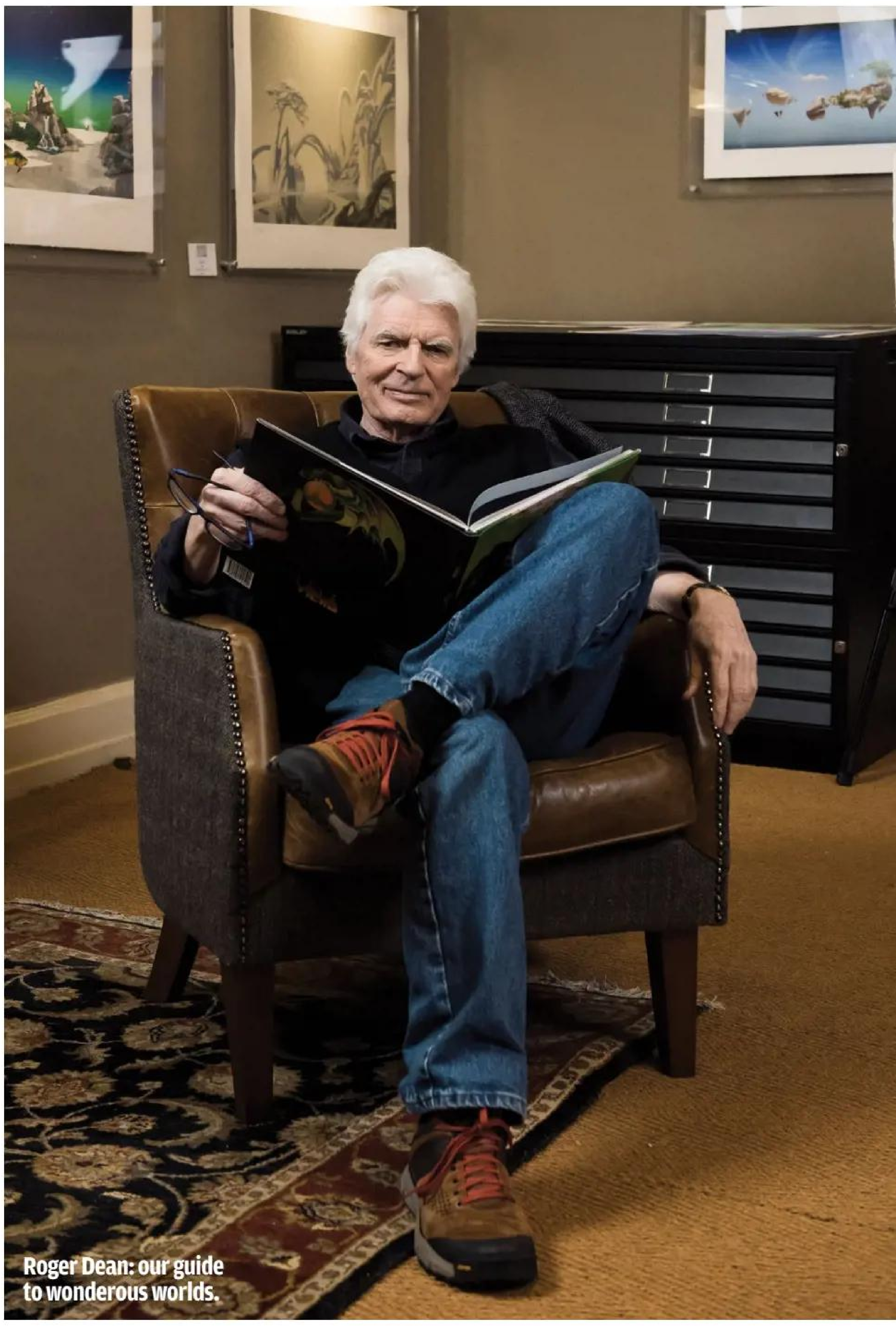
"Working with Yes was a fantastic treat," he recalls. "At Vertigo I didn't really have that close relationship with the bands. With Yes it was full-on and it was interesting and exciting. What made it wonderful was there was no art director involved and they trusted that I knew what I was doing. There was no invigilator saying, 'Maybe you should do this, maybe you should do that.' It was all down to me and then talking with the guys.

"They had the title *Fragile* and Bill Bruford said the idea was to put the 'fragile' label that you would see on instrument flight cases on the album cover. I didn't want to do anything so literal. I wanted to do something that took the idea of fragility and wrapped it around the world, which would be very relevant in these days. It was more of an abstract idea then. They liked it and it worked." Dean's sleeve added to the sense of growing confidence around the band. The booklet stitched into the inside of the gatefold reinforced the sense that this was a band to taken very seriously.

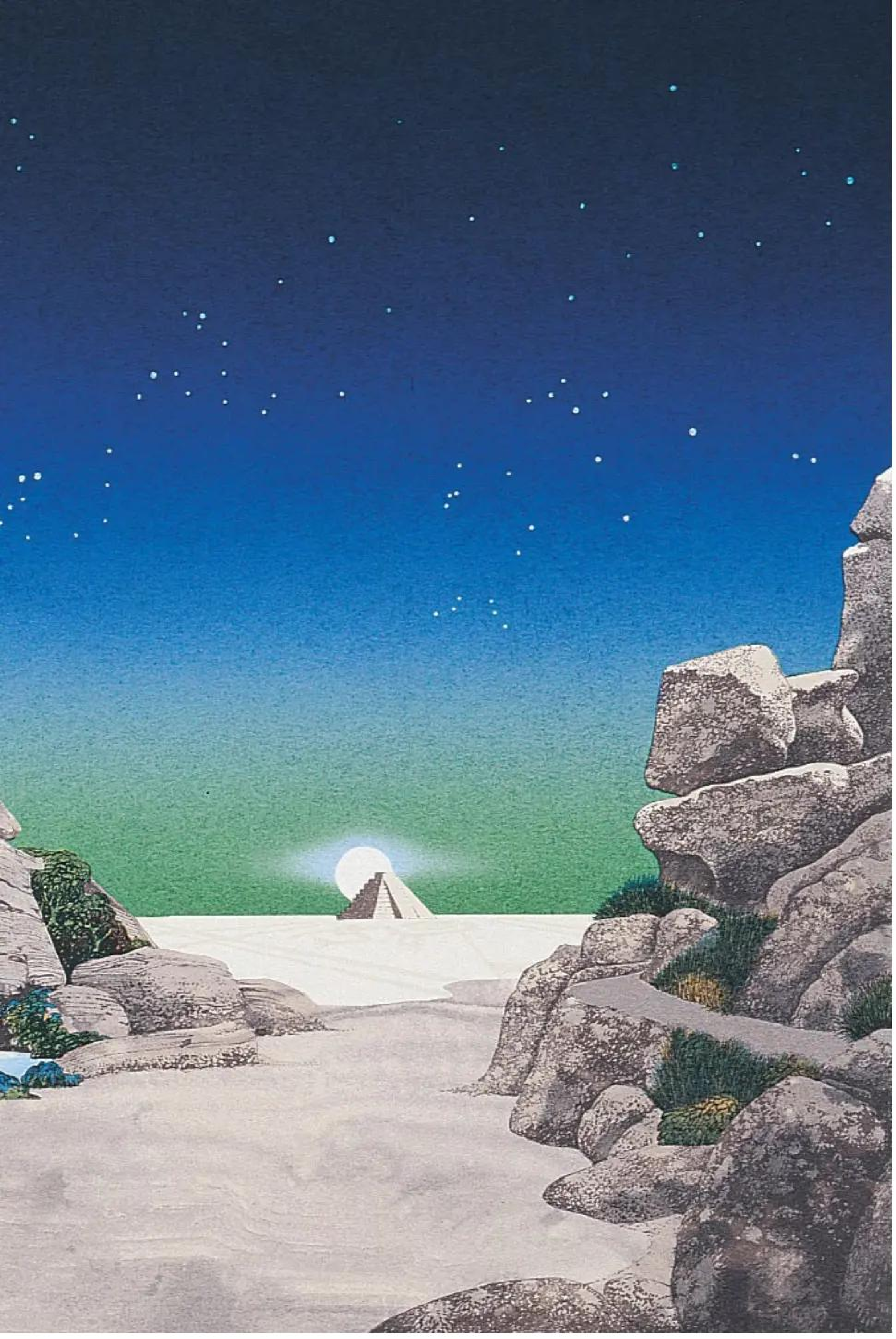
Dean's impetus for *Close To The Edge* came from wanting to paint a world that was magical, miniature and like a Bonsai; seemingly impossible but totally credible to the eye. "The landscape was absolutely inspired by the title. I was painting landscapes to look real and in the most literal sense of the word, enticing. I wanted them to pull you in and make people want to imagine what it would be like getting on a boat to that island."

Surprised that this floating world was chosen to reside on the interior of the gatefold, Dean came up with the simple yet distinguished green leather-bound look for the front. Warned by someone in the marketing department at Atlantic that "green doesn't sell," not for the first or last time in his career, Dean ignored such advice and trusted his gut.

The now-famous logo adorning the front began life on a train ride from London to Brighton. "I started with a notion that you can put these three letters together in an interesting way and by the time I got to Brighton I'd



Roger Dean: our guide to wonderous worlds.



***Tales From Topographic Oceans*. Whose faces do *you* see in the rocks?**

pretty much done it." The design and its durability validate Dean's bugbear that distinctive design need not be bland or boring. Inspired by his own visits to the Scottish Highlands and England's Lake District, the inner painting of *Close To The Edge* not only encapsulates the environments implicit in the music and lyrics but offers a fictional world that's big enough to allow listeners to project their own stories and interpretations.

"People have told me that they've found members of the band in the rocks on *Tales From Topographic Oceans*, or that they can find most of them but not Alan or Chris or whoever," he says. "I do remember somebody asking me about some symbolism in my work and me saying that it isn't there and that basically they were imagining it. This person's reaction was, 'How the fuck would you know? You're just the artist!' (Laughs) In a way I know what he meant because it's almost like automatic writing: you're the tool of another power."

Patterns in the land, those made by man and the forces of nature, such as dragon or ley lines, have always had a place in Dean's interests and were part of his thinking for Yes' most controversial album to date.

"I remember in 1973, on a flight to Japan, Jon came and sat next to me to talk about what *Tales From Topographic Oceans* would be about. All the way from London to Anchorage [in Alaska] I was stoned. I couldn't talk and Jon was the same, both of us sat staring. But after Anchorage, I couldn't stop talking. We were flying over Northern Siberia and it was just magical out of the window and I couldn't stop enthusing about a book I'd done the cover painting for, which was John Michell's *The View Over Atlantis*. It was about patterns in the landscape, hence the title. Topography is about maps, a topographic view of the landscape. That was my take on it."

When it comes to choosing a favourite Dean cover, one he might want to put on the wall of his living room, Steve Howe laughs. "I've already got the original painting Roger did for the *Beginnings* album on the wall," he reveals. "But of those he did for us between 1971 and 1974, I'd have to go for *Tales From Topographic Oceans*. I think in a way it's the most classically intricate and varied of them all. It's so grandiose and with the earth and oceans on it, for me it has that sense of balance. I would say it is one of the most incredible sleeves of that era."

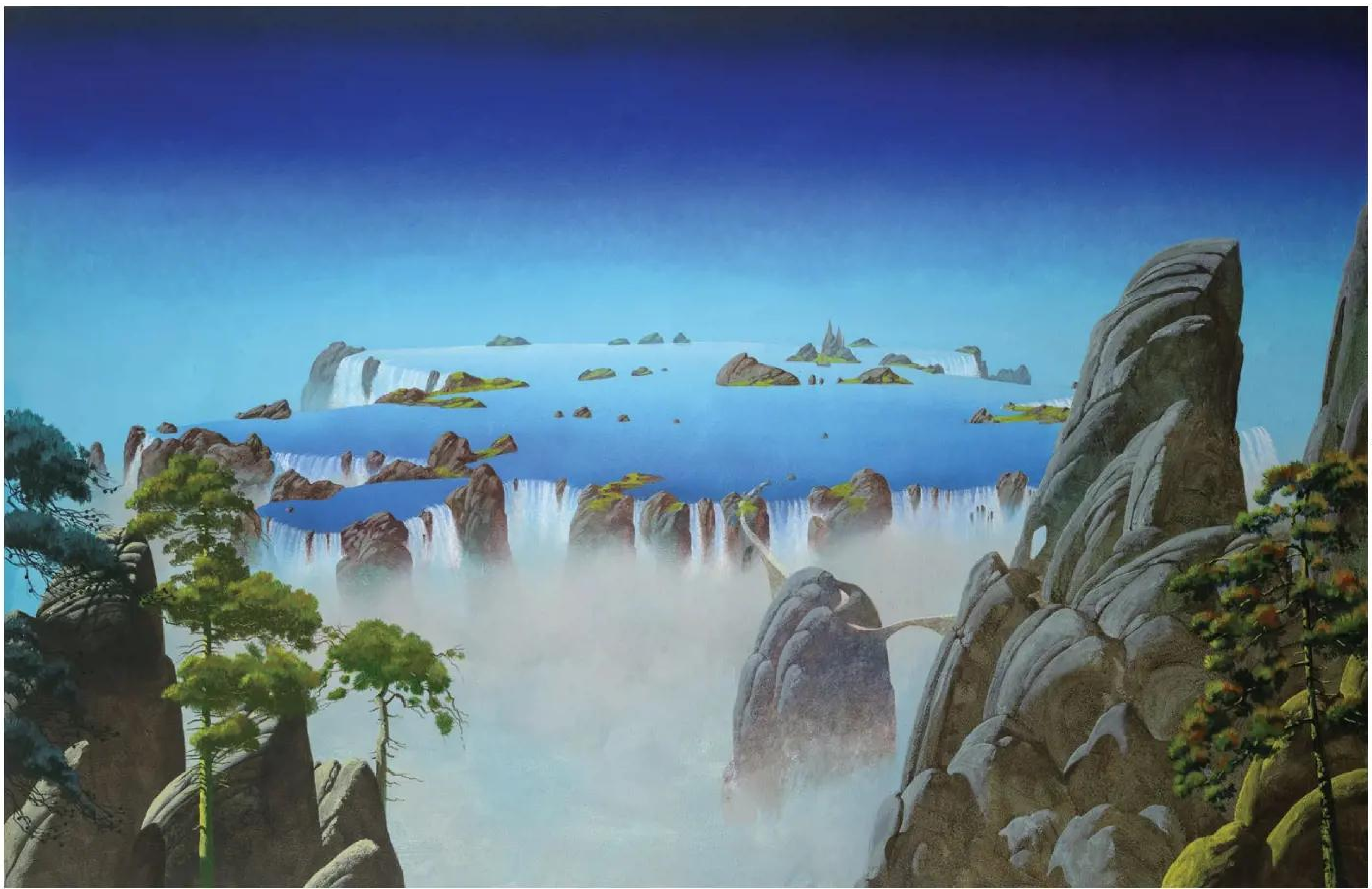
Working on 1974's *Relayer* cover was hard, admits Dean. "It was a lot of very precise drawing. It's so minimalist in colour with just the faintest watercolour tints, but it's not minimalist in ideas. The potential for narrative in that painting is enormous. I remember Jon looking at the painting and saying he wanted to call the album *Relayer*, pointing at the riders and you know that image of the messenger. I'd never heard it at that point but I saw the title, *The Gates Of Delirium*. I thought that should've been the name of the album, for Christ's sake! I've just done a limited-edition print of the cover after being pressed to do one for 40 years. I've called it *The Gates Of Delirium* with *Relayer* in brackets."

Asking Dean to chose a favourite out of these particular covers is a bit like asking a parent to chose one of their children over another. Dean laughs wryly when asked to do just that. "Well, I would have to say that the one that's closest to my heart is what I'm going to call *The Gates Of Delirium*. But, week to week it changes. I can go for weeks, a month thinking, 'Wow, that was a bloody amazing piece, I'm so proud I did that.' But it could be something totally different, I was going to say a week later, but it could be a day or even an hour later!" he says with a laugh.

When *Prog* caught up with Dean, it was in the dark of January. He was preparing for an exhibition at the Los Angeles Art Show the following month. "But what I've spent most time doing this year is [talking] on the phone and presentations. What I expect to spend the most time doing for the rest of the year is working on architectural projects and close on the heels of that, a story with interactive elements in it. This is a virtual project but the architecture is meant to be completely for-real. It will be all curvilinear with spires and all the things you would associate with my work."

As he talks about this as-yet-unnamed and fully explorable virtual experience, one gets a tangible sense of the sheer creative energy that's driven him throughout every one of his 75 summers around the sun. That young boy who climbed Lion Rock on his own, who gazed at nine dragons, who filled his head with fantastical landscapes and artfully charted the magical topography of those lands and oceans he imagined, all these years later, is still brimming with the visions he desperately wants to carry on exploring. We are very lucky to be able to join him as he keeps on climbing. Ⓟ

For more, visit www.rogerdean.com and Trading Boundaries Fine Art Gallery www.tradingboundaries.com, phone: (+44) 1825 790200.



The new version of the *Close To The Edge* gatefold illustration.

©ROGER DEAN CLOSE TO THE EDGE II 1973/2021

Across The Great

Divide

Yes, L-R: Billy Sherwood, Jon Davison, Steve Howe, Alan White, Geoff Downes.

After a seven-year gap between studio releases, **Yes** are back with their long-awaited 22nd album, *The Quest*. Steve Howe and Geoff Downes tell *Prog* why reinvention is so important to them and why, after 53 years, they still believe that Yes have a lot to offer their fans.

Words: Dave Ling
Images: Gottlieb Bros

Among the most fascinating aspects about Yes is the band's perpetual state of transience. De facto leaders have come and gone as each chapter of their saga unfolds. Following the loss of co-founding bass player Chris Squire in 2015, Steve Howe has emerged as the group's latest alpha male. Now into a third spell as a player, the guitarist produced and pretty much drove the bus as the post-Squire incarnation of the band laid down their inaugural statement – their 22nd studio album.

> "We can't deny that *Heaven & Earth* was not well received. It was a linear type of album; it lacked the dynamics of this one."
>
> **Geoff Downes**

Howe's mission with *The Quest* was simple. "I wanted to help Yes reinvent itself," he explains. The 1990s and beyond, as Howe readily admits, "was a bit of a spotty period of Yes. You take the 1970s – need I say more? And you take the 1980s – again, need I say more? But the 90s was a mixed bag. I don't know how successful I've been, but I was trying to build a new model of Yes."

Cards on table time: this writer has interviewed Howe many times, both as a part of Yes and during his heady days with Asia, and Howe can be a bit of a crotchety old so-and-so. As a musician's musician he would rather play music than talk about it. However, today there's something evangelical about the guy.

It's a suggestion that Geoff Downes, the keyboardist who knows Howe very well from

Steve Howe: a man unleashed!

those Asia times and his own multiple tenures with Yes, is in firm agreement with.

"Steve is galvanised," enthuses Downes with a wide smile. "The chains are off, he's a man unleashed. At 74, I don't know how he does it, but Steve is very motivated. It [the role of leader] wasn't exactly bestowed upon him; it's just something he has stepped up to."

Like every other band to make an album over the past two years, Yes faced an additional foe. Along with the band's singer of almost a decade's standing, Jon Davison, Howe first got together to compare song ideas in the autumn of 2019, but under lockdown Davison was largely stuck in Barbados while drummer Alan White and bass player Billy Sherwood remained at their homes in Seattle and Los Angeles respectively. With Howe and Downes both based in England, there were times when groups of one or more could visit the studio they called 'Yes HQ' in Sussex, although for the most part the album was made in isolation.

"The process of making *The Quest* was like no other Yes album, but it was also quite fun," Howe confides. "Artistically and creatively speaking, it [Covid] didn't block us at all."

"It wasn't too difficult actually, because Downes Braide Association [his project with singer Chris Braide] also work remotely," Downes agrees during a separate Zoom conversation. "One of the positives of the pandemic is that, for bands of a certain maturity, being together in a studio and thrashing it out is no longer mandatory. We're used to trading files and ideas."

The pair both expect additional levels of scrutiny given that *The Quest* is the first Yes album to be made without Squire.

"Yeah, certainly, we can't avoid that fact," the guitarist nods calmly. "There was a real need for Billy [Sherwood, Chris' replacement] to step up, and he did that. You can hear him on [album opener] *The Ice Bridge*. With the way that we balance the band, the bass is a very key instrument and we hope that we have brought credit to Chris and his legacy."

Both cheerfully acknowledge that *The Quest* had to offer a marked improvement over its predecessor, 2014's Roy Thomas Baker (Queen, Journey, Hawkwind)-produced *Heaven & Earth*, which was far too lacklustre for its own good.

"I would agree with that completely," responds Howe before breaking into a smile. "I won't keep this a secret any longer — I said to Roger [Dean, illustrator]: 'The sleeve is better than the record.' *Heaven & Earth* was a troublesome record to make, and that's because the producer is responsible for more than the way the record sounds; they control the atmosphere, the [inter-band] feeling and the progression and development of the music."

"We can't deny that *Heaven & Earth* was not well received," Downes agrees. "It was a linear type of album; it lacked the dynamics of this one."

"We made *The Quest* in a fruitful and happy way, which wasn't true of *Heaven & Earth*," Howe elaborates. "The same applies to *Fly From Here* [2011], *Magnification* [2001], *The Ladder* [1999] and *Open Your Eyes* [1997]. In the past there have been a lot of headaches around the making of Yes records; I wanted to dispel that."

The Quest certainly doesn't sound like the handiwork of a band plagued by in-fighting or self-doubt, even if its promotion began with a massive own goal. Upon the unveiling of a first YouTube song, the three-part suite *The Ice Bridge*, they were forced to add a belated credit for Francis Monkman due to similarities with the former Sky and Curved Air keyboardist's own 1978 piece *The Dawn Of An Era*.

"That caused a certain amount of contention," sighs Downes, who'd discovered the basic song idea an old work tape and mistakenly took it for something of his own, originally co-authoring it with Davison, "but having said that I think we created a very powerful piece of music."

The Ice Bridge is one of several songs recorded with a 47-piece orchestra, and if readers listen carefully enough, in keeping with its theme of global warming, there's a literal moment of ice-breaking.

"Yeah, that was one of my kinky ideas," Howe chuckles. "We found this sound of an iceberg breaking up and everybody liked it, so it got used. I'm not shy of sound effects."

In a practical sense, the task of adding orchestration to songs such as *Dare To Know* and *Minus The Man* wasn't easy, given that the classical musicians were thousands of miles away in Macedonia, and recording was slated to last a single day. It helped that Yes had implicit trust in the scores supplied by their arranger Paul K Joyce.

"This is not an orchestral album," Howe stresses. "We used the orchestra for added augmentation. *Dare To Know* has a 16-bar section where the band stops playing and the orchestra continues with the theme, and that provides a great moment."

In stark contrast to its one-dimensional predecessor, the album's sweeping palettes of light and shade offer nods to the band's past.

"One thing I didn't want was a pastiche of something we had done before," says Howe.

Downes agrees: "If people are expecting Part Two of *Close To The Edge*, well it's not that, but there are elements of 1970s Yes.

Yes: the gardening leave is over.

I used a lot of Hammond organ, acoustic and electric piano, Minimoogs and a Mellotron, but in many ways it's also an album that sits in quite a modern setting."

The two-CD set is broken down into eight tracks that comprise the 'main' album, complemented by a further three presented on a separate disc. However, Howe becomes a little agitated by *Prog*'s use of the term 'bonus tracks'.

"Those are tainted words," he insists. "I cannot overstate the fact that those three songs are not rejects or throwaways."

"I wanted to help Yes reinvent itself."

Steve Howe

In fact, another of its finest tracks, the Davison/Howe-penned *Sister Sleeping Soul*, falls into the 'bonus' category.

"It's by no means inferior, it's a fresh and beautifully constructed song," agrees Howe. "I'm using a Portuguese guitar, which places it in the area of *Wonderous Stories* [from 1977's *Going For The One*] or *Your Move* [*The Yes Album*, 1971]."

So it's fitting that *The Quest* marks Yes' debut for InsideOut, a real progressive rock label for a real progressive rock band.

"This is where we belong," Howe enthuses. "Thomas Waber [label co-founder] is hard to please, but the great thing about his company is that they give a shit. Just like us, they're not farting around."

Steve Howe has been a part of Yes since replacing Peter Banks for the watershed set *The Yes Album*, logging up some 38 years of service in total. Having joined briefly with fellow former Buggles conspirator Trevor Horn for the controversial *Drama*, leaving and rejoining with *Fly From Here*, Downes is now into an 11th year on board. Regardless, within the 2021 line-up original members are conspicuous by their absence. Without sounding glib… does it even matter?

"Well, I like to think that we still have contact with Bill Bruford [co-founding drummer] and Tony Kaye [keyboardist], and I'm still friendly with Jon [Anderson, vocalist] and the other guys who are around, but there's a limited number of original members sharing the planet with us at the moment," Howe responds after a moment's pause. "And I definitely think that there is support for a band that carries the name forward."

Howe admits to occasionally meeting fans that tell him the band shouldn't be continuing without Chris Squire.

"There will always be naysayers, and to a degree I understand where those thoughts come from," he states. "We are sticking our necks out with *The Quest*; it isn't a given that it will be successful, but I'm hopeful that we can cross that bridge and reignite [the belief of] some of those fans."

In the grand scheme of things, is it important that Yes should continue?

"Well, the alternative option is that it doesn't – that's the reality, in black and white terms," Howe responds. "Keeping things going doesn't come without challenges, but we're holding onto the gauntlet and we have a huge respect for the original members."

Downes: "I see no reason why the band shouldn't continue. Maybe some people think we should just bash out the old songs and behave like a circus act, but I disagree. After 53 years we are still putting out new albums. I believe that Yes still have a lot to offer."

Right now, with a record as satisfying as *The Quest* to show the world, Planet Yes seems like a pretty good place to be.

"Well, we're *making* it so," Howe replies sagely. "The challenge is to meet the expectations of others, and I still feel that there's a place for Yes. The band has such a fantastic history and we are doing our utmost to carry that into the future."

Yes don't resume touring in the UK until next summer, with a set featuring the best moments from *The Quest* and some catalogue gems, plus an in-its-entirety revision of their seventh album, *Relayer*. Having spent so long locked away, Downes suspects it will be "strange" to hit the boards again.

"We've had a couple of years of gardening leave, but the band are ready to go and anxious to begin the next chapter," he concludes. "*The Quest* isn't the last album you'll hear from us. We're already talking about the next one." Ⓟ

Going for the One

We asked *Prog* readers to tell us what their favourite Yes songs were. And boy, did you! Almost 50,000 of you voted in our recent online poll, which is a massive count in anyone's book! So thank you to everyone who took part. And now we've sorted through your responses and compiled a Top 40. You can see the poll results over the following pages. You might just find a few surprises too!

Words:
Jerry Ewing, Grant Moon, Chris Roberts, Johnny Sharp, David West

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

40. THE REMEMBERING (HIGH THE MEMORY)

Tales From Topographic Oceans, 1973

Jon Anderson wanted "a calm sea of music" for Side Two of *…Topographic Oceans*, according to biographer Tim Morse. But nothing ever turned out so simple with this band. The opening passages are dreamy, but Howe can't help but disturb the peace with emotive guitar lines and electric sitar. Squire's lively bass offsets the singer's Hindu-influenced visions and vocal musings, to beguiling effect. **JS**

39. THE FISH (SCHINDLERIA PRAEMATURUS)

Fragile, 1971

A showcase for its composer Chris Squire – the title came from Squire's nickname as a result of his fondness for taking very long baths. It's built around a groove in 7/8, with Steve Howe picking out the harmonics on guitar as a backdrop. Live, the track was a platform for Squire to stretch out with an extended solo, fine examples of which can be found on *Yessongs* and *Live At Montreux*. **DW**

38. HOMEWORLD (THE LADDER)

The Ladder, 1999

The Ladder saw Yes working with producer Bruce Fairbairn, who brought much of the warmth and ambition of their classic 70s albums back to the music, evidenced in the grand scale of *Homeworld*. "Yes seem to have come round in a beautiful cycle," says Jon Anderson in Stuart Chambers' Yes biography. "It's remarkable that we're still making music, and it's viable music, and it's very adventurous still. It is still, to coin a phrase, progressive." **DW**

The Ladder, 1999.

37. SHOOT HIGH AIM LOW

Big Generator, 1987

Four years separated *Big Generator* from *90125* and the album had a difficult gestation that saw Yes switching studios, countries and producers before it was finished. *Shoot High, Aim Low* is unmistakeably a product of its time with a slick, polished production; note the gated reverb on Alan White's drums, a technique that had become ubiquitous thanks to Phil Collins' *In The Air Tonight*. There's a live performance on 2005's *The Word Is Live*. **DW**

Big Generator, 1987.

36. MOOD FOR A DAY

Fragile, 1971

Steve Howe's one-man contribution to *Fragile* is a classical gas. If his signature showpiece *Clap* doffs its cap to his guitar hero Chet Atkins, this three-minute marvel owes more to another early idol, Spanish classical guitarist Andrés Segovia. Howe demonstrates some Flamenco-style strumming, and that rangy left hand of his fingers an ornate, baroque melody harking back to Bach. The penultimate song on its parent record, *Mood For A Day* is a tasty palate cleanser before the final course, *Heart Of The Sunrise*. **GRM**

Yes recording *Fragile* at Advision Studios in London, August 1971. From left: Bill Bruford, Chris Squire, Steve Howe, Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman.

35. ENDLESS DREAM

Talk, 1994

Closing out the undervalued mid-90s album is this three-part, 15-minute epic, fruitfully recalling Yes' longer numbers of earlier times (it's effectively the title track). Trevor Rabin, at the helm producing, wrote the bulk of it, and both Anderson and White have since sung its praises, the former likening it to *Awaken*. Its shifts between busily robust and calmly chilled are consummately handled, with Squire and White reminding us why they're counted among progressive rock's most dazzling rhythm sections. **CR**

34. HOLD ON

90125, 1983

One of Yes' less-heralded qualities has always been their versatility, and this is as good a reflection of it as any. *Hold On* manages to take the emerging AOR, FM-friendly sound of Asia, Journey, Foreigner et al and repurpose it, while also adding a gutsy rock edge echoing the increasingly dominant pop-rock sound of Bon Jovi and their ilk. Trevor Rabin's tidy guitar licks and way with a winning chorus are never in doubt, but Anderson and Squire's harmonies and intricate bridge section also stamp this song with an inimitable Yes identity as the band reinvent themselves for a new era. **JS**

33. LEAVE IT

90125, 1983

After the incredible success of *90125*'s first single *Owner Of A Lonely Heart*, the pressure was on to repeat the trick. The follow-up, *Leave It*, didn't reach the same giddy heights, peaking at No.24 in the US in April '84, but it's still a curious, clever piece. Squire's bassline (the kernel of the song) is groovy, Trevors Rabin and Horn contribute to the numerous catchy motifs and lyrics about the 'pleasures' of touring, and Squire joins Rabin and Anderson on those huge, Synclavier-enhanced choral harmonies. Horn's slick production and Godley and Creme's 18 arty, upside-down MTV videos add to the 80s charm. **GRM**

32. LOVE WILL FIND A WAY

Big Generator, 1987

The first single released from the *Big Generator* album, this is as good a slice of progressive pop as you're likely to find, but, as with its parent album, not one that finds much favour with a certain section of the Yes fanbase. Written by Trevor Rabin with Stevie Nicks in mind (the sort of thing to drive Yes' more narrow-minded fans to utter distraction), drummer Alan White heard the song, liked it, and pushed it forward for Yes to record. The single made No.30 on the US Billboard chart, too. The band would never feature so high in a singles chart again. **JE**

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Yes in August 1980. L-R: Alan White, Geoff Downes, Chris Squire, Trevor Horn and Steve Howe.

31. DON'T KILL THE WHALE

Tormato, 1978

That Yes were at each other's throats during the recording of *Tormato* is well documented and goes a long way to explaining why many of the Yes faithful care little for the album. This, the only single release from *Tormato*, is certainly one of the most consistent and coherent songs on offer. It was largely written by Chris Squire and Jon Anderson and based around an environmental poem the latter had penned, with Rick Wakeman chiming in with sounds he conjured from his newly acquired Polymoog that he thought sounded like the titular animal. The single breached the UK Top 40, reaching No.36. **JE**

30. ON THE SILENT WINGS OF FREEDOM

Tormato, 1978

Tormato was the divisive album that precipitated Yes splitting up two years later. The self-produced recording sessions were difficult and not entirely conducive – Alan White's drums sound thin despite being forward in the mix. Nonetheless, *On The Silent Wings Of Freedom* finds the band on vigorous musical form, leaning towards fusion in the density of the playing, with Wakeman and Howe competing for space, and Chris Squire's lithe, melodic basslines that suggest the influence of Weather Report and Jaco Pastorius. Wakeman had expanded his arsenal to include a Polymoog, which opened up polyphonic voicings not available on the Minimoog. **DW**

29. ONWARD

Tormato, 1978

The album may have been described as a "tragedy" by Wakeman, and even the eternally positive Jon Anderson told *Classic Rock*: "We threw tomatoes at ourselves before the audience could." Prog fan Fish once said, "Even I hated *Tormato*." But hey, it's not all bad. Written by Chris Squire and with orchestral arrangements by his *Fish Out Of Water* ally Andrew Pryce Jackman, this gentle ballad was among Squire's favourites of all his songs. *The Detroit Free Press* agreed, calling it the strongest track. A cover by Mark Kozelek featured in Paolo Sorrentino's melancholic 2015 film *Youth*, starring Michael Caine and Harvey Keitel. **CR**

28. IT CAN HAPPEN

90125, 1983

This song, penned by Chris Squire with additional input from Trevor Rabin, had its genesis in the initial sessions for the Cinema project, before that mutated into the line-up for *90125*. A raga-like, sitar-laced introduction, accompanied by Squire's bubbling bass and Jon Anderson's shimmering, ultra-produced vocal, seems to reflect a hippie-ish message repackaged for the MTV era, allied to a shiny new poptimism. Chris Squire later told the *Songfacts* website that the lyrics were "a message of hope, and just making a way through the world looking for the good route – the one that suits you and leads on to better things." The positive thinking is infectious. **DW**

27. TIME AND A WORD

Time And A Word, 1970

The title track of Yes' second album honked of the psychedelic era that birthed them. Recorded at Advision, it was written in 1969 by Jon Anderson and David Foster, his old mate from Accrington band The Warriors. Yes' then-guitarist Peter Banks added some beautiful textures to the song's

Tormato, 1978.

anthemic Beatles-y chord progression (recently Anderson has interpolated *All You Need Is Love* and *She Loves You* in his solo version). Tony Cox's brass and string arrangements on the album may still prove a little divisive, but they're part of the vibe of this singalong love-in, which glanced the UK Album Charts at No.45 that August. **GRM**

Time And A Word, 1970.

26. PARALLELS

Going For The One, 1977

Chris Squire wrote *Parallels* intending for the song to appear on his *Fish Out Of Water* album, but as Squire told fans in a Q&A on the *Yesworld* website in 2013, "back in the days of vinyl, there was not enough space for it on the album – we were limited to 20 minutes per side of the vinyl long player – so when Yes went to Switzerland in 1976 to start recording *Going For The One*, I put the song forward." The track is dominated by Rick Wakeman, who is playing the pipe organ at St Martin's Church in Switzerland and capturing all the natural reverb of the church's high ceilings. **DW**

Drama, 1980.

25. TO BE OVER

Relayer, 1974

Sure, *The Gates Of Delirium* is the focus of the Yes album on which Patrick Moraz did such a great job that Rick Wakeman felt left out and returned. Yet the nine-minute closer *To Be Over* is a lovely Anderson-Howe creation, the stems of which came to Howe (who's inspired here) while he was boating on the Serpentine lake. Anderson, talking to Stephen Demorest in '75, described it as "strong in content, but mellow in overall attitude: it's about how you should look after yourself when things go wrong". Its atmosphere blissfully completes what *Melody Maker* then called "one of the most satisfying Yes albums", and one whose reputation only grows. **CR**

24. TEMPUS FUGIT

Drama, 1980

Drama may not have the most prominent place in the hearts of many Yes fans, but this album closer did much to help evolve the post-Anderson Yes identity, as Buggles duo Trevor Horn and Geoff Downes made a surprise entrance to the fold and the vocals of Horn and Squire proved themselves fully capable of filling the gap at centre-stage. The title is Latin for 'time flies', and it's hard not to get swept up in its sheer energetic vim and Squire's bass. As Geoff Downes told *Songfacts*: "Because the pace of the song is so fast, that was all about the title. It's an extremely fast pace. The title almost picked itself." And now, when we can listen to it without our judgement being clouded by the dismay of not hearing the voice that had previously embodied this band, it also manages to stand up proudly against the rest of the Yes back catalogue. **JS**

23. MACHINE MESSIAH

Drama, 1980

With Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman having quit, Yes wasted little time in showing that they had moved on with *Machine Messiah*, the song that opens the *Drama* album with a sludgy heavy metal riff that sounds more like Tony Iommi than Steve Howe. The music doesn't stay in doom territory for long, however, moving into a more familiar vein that allows Trevor Horn to prove he could inhabit the upper register that Jon Anderson made such an integral part of Yes' musical signature. The instrumental mid-section alternates between measures of six and seven, with an underlying triplet pulse from Alan White, proving that despite the arrival of The Buggles' Horn and Geoff Downes from the world of pop, the band still had formidable technical chops. Live versions can be found on *In The Present – Live From Lyon*, sung by Benoît David, and *Topographic Drama – Live Across America*, sung by Jon Davison. **DW**

***Relayer*-era Yes:** (l-r, from top): Alan White, Chris Squire, Jon Anderson, Steve Howe, Patrick Moraz.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

22. CHANGES

90125, 1983

90125 was the album that brought Yes back from the dead and, against the odds, gave them a string of hit singles, including *Changes*. New guitarist Trevor Rabin brought a contemporary rock edge to their sound that was markedly different from Steve Howe's classical inflections. *Changes* was born from one of Rabin's ideas and it's easy to hear the influence of The Police's Andy Summers in the verse riff. The lyrics sprang from Rabin's frustrations dealing with record executives while a solo artist. "In a meeting I went to, they played Foreigner to me," Rabin recalls in Tim Morse's *Yesstories*, "and they said, 'You've got to start writing stuff more like Foreigner.' I said, 'I'm not going to, but thanks anyway.' I thought, 'I'm going through all these changes, it's very strange.' And consequently I think that's when that song started coming to me. It's kind of a melancholy song." **DW**

21. AMERICA

Yesterdays, 1975

An early live favourite once Howe joined, the studio version first appeared on a 1972 showcase sampler before adorning this compilation. Paul Simon's original, as debuted on Simon And Garfunkel's *Bookends*, is a real masterclass in evocative understatement. Yes' 10-and-a-half minute version is not. Those who say Yes were bombastically over the top? This is where they have a point. That conceded, there's a manic genius to the way Yes change time signatures, elongate instrumental flourishes, and shovel in some *West Side Story* for good measure. Somehow, a four-minute edit made the Billboard Pop Singles Top 50. Influenced more by The Nice and Crimson than by S&G (of whom Squire and Anderson were genuine fans), *America* remains one of the most Marmite love/hate tracks in Yes' catalogue, and perhaps in the history of progressive rock. Put it this way, if it took Paul Simon "four days to hitchhike from Saginaw", this manifestation of Yes would've taken four weeks. **CR**

20. SOUND CHASER

Relayer, 1974

What Jon Anderson describes in the lyrics as "electric freedom" finds expression in *Relayer*'s truly frenetic, jazz-rock workout. Patrick Moraz tells of how, on meeting the band, he was played work in progress from this track. "They blew my mind," he said. Then he was thrown in the deep end: "Jon asked me to come up with some kind of introduction to the whole thing. So I kind of instant-composed the intro on the spot," he told Yes biographer Tim Morse. The Swiss newcomer's Moog solo later on was also nailed "in one or two takes", while Telecaster work from Steve Howe is equally mesmerising. He has referred to the track's "indescribable mixture of Patrick's jazzy keyboards and my weird sort of flamenco electric [guitar]", but Alan White (who has singled out *Relayer* as his favourite Yes album) also stretches his drumming abilities to their limits in order to keep up. **JS**

19. TURN OF THE CENTURY

Going For The One, 1977

Few entries in the Yes catalogue compare with *Turn Of The Century* for sheer musical and lyrical unity. Written by Anderson, Howe and (in a major role) White, it's an elaboration on the Greek myth of Pygmalion – a sculptor who fell in love with one of his sculptures. Here, a sculptor's beloved wife dies, he makes a figure in her likeness and she is seemingly reincarnated. Howe's acoustic, minor key intro sets the theme, guitars and voice intertwine, with Rick Wakeman's piano and Chris Squire's bass adding ravishing colour and movement to the romantic narrative. With Wakeman replacing the ousted Patrick Moraz, the song was recorded at Mountain Studios in Montreux, Switzerland (Wakeman would record his *Criminal Record* there later in '77). Howe would revisit this on his 1995 album *Tales From Yesterday*, with a sublime vocal from Renaissance's Annie Halsam. One of Yes' truly transcendent storytelling moments. **GRM**

18. RITUAL (NOUS SOMMES DU SOLEIL)

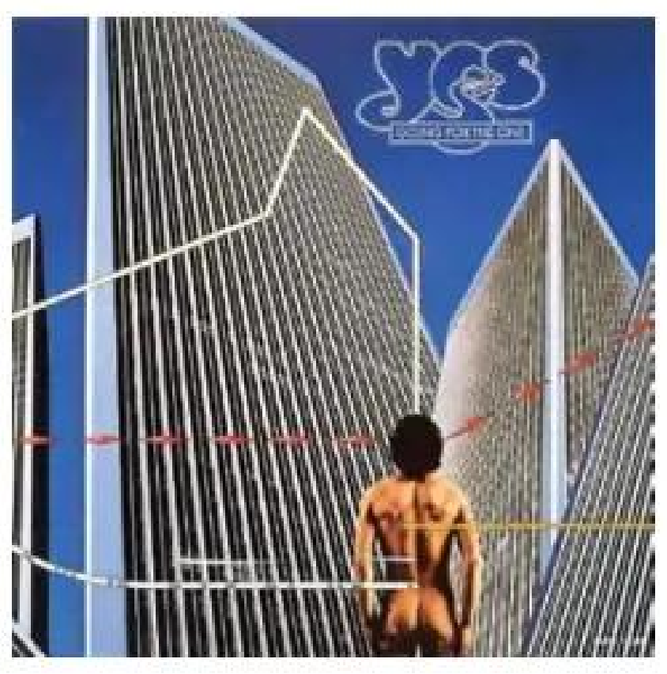
Tales From Topographic Oceans, 1973

One of the most cosmic things ever recorded in Willesden, *Tales…* is the point where Yes either went high into the stratosphere or up their own back passages, depending on your stance. It's certainly true that in recent years the herd mentality dismissal of it has seemed less and less valid. The daunting double album's sides One and Four, in particular, are winning fresh admirers for their ambition and charm. *Ritual* – the 21-and-a-half minute finale – sees the band strive to gather the threads together and bring it all on home with a bang, a vengeance and a sense of transcendence. Howe collates his guitar themes into something approaching a narrative, and the piano notes underscoring the *'nous sommes du soleil'* refrain were the work of Alan White, while Wakeman was AWOL. Wakeman's famously said he hates it, but Anderson told *Classic Rock*, "At least we tried." And then some. **CR**

Tales From Topographic Oceans, 1973.

Yesterdays, 1975.

Going For The One, 1977.



17. THE REVEALING SCIENCE OF GOD (DANCE OF THE DAWN)

Tales From Topographic Oceans, 1973

ELP might have introduced classical compositions into the progressive rock sphere, but *Tales From Topographic Oceans* went several steps further. It was a double album of four suites with *The Revealing Science Of God* comprising the entirety of the first side. Artistically, it was a reaction to the success of *Roundabout*. "We weren't really that concerned about having a hit record," said Jon Anderson to *Songfacts*. "I didn't feel as part of the band we should ever try to make another *Roundabout* or make another *Fragile* record. That's why within a space of time, three years, the record companies got very upset with us, because we were doing diverse music and *…Topographic Oceans*." The main concept was inspired by Anderson reading about the yogi and guru Paramahansa Yogananda and after his idea to record in a forest led to naught, he brought bales of hay and flowers to the recording studio. **DW**

16. GOING FOR THE ONE

Going For The One, 1977

The lyrical theme of the opening title track of the 1977 album – the quest for sporting excellence – seemed surprisingly unproggy. Yet it also symbolised a band in lean, fighting-fit shape to meet the growing challenge of the punk revolution. Steve Howe's broad strokes of Chuck Berry-style boogie and steel guitar twang usher in the track and resurface throughout, signalling a new songwriting style willing to embrace pop hooks without jettisoning heady experimentation. But this is no dumbed-down affair. The increasing dominance of dizzying synthesiser and guitar spirals and celestial harmonies turn this into an alternative chamber pop vision that is Yes, but not as you know them. "We felt marvellously fresh and excited, and the recording had a great feel about it," Howe said about the album on the liner notes of its 2003 reissue, and as a statement of intent, this was a formidable opening salvo. **JS**

15. PERPETUAL CHANGE

The Yes Album, 1971

With the band line-up in constant flux over the years and their music ever-evolving, this song title's often used as a headline for articles about Yes. The song itself closes the embarrassment of riches that is their third outing, and from the opening stabs of guitar and keys to the triumphant instrumental fade, this Anderson/Squire co-write left listeners in no doubt they were witnessing a unique new voice in rock music. Having replaced Peter Banks, Steve Howe engages his full arsenal here: country picking, pedal steel-like swells, Wes Montgomery-style jazzy passages added to tough blues and fusion lines. Online you can find the isolated tracks of Squire and Bruford's bass and drums – it's potent stuff. Around the 05:35 mark, one odd-metered section drifts to the left speaker while the right grinds out the song's main theme, and we're really not in Kansas any more. Anderson's opening lines: *'I see the cold mist in the night/And watch the hills roll out of sight'* were inspired by the Devon countryside where the writing sessions first began, and this expands into a meditation on the nature of the universe, infinity and our place in it. This epic album coda points towards the musical adventures yet to come on *Fragile* and *Close To The Edge*. **GRM**

14. WONDEROUS STORIES

Going For The One, 1977

Although Yes had released singles, and to some acclaim in the States, the thought of them even doing suchlike here went very much against the thinking of a large part of their fanbase. That all changed when they released the three minutes and 45 seconds of *Wonderous Stories*. The shortest track from *Going For The One*, it's a simple acoustic ballad credited solely to Jon Anderson, emboldened by the rest of the band joining in on the music, and, according to Steve Howe, written during the singer's "Renaissance period", with the song portraying the simple pleasures of a beautiful day. The demo, along with *Going For The One*, were sent to Wakeman following Patrick Moraz's departure, instigating his return as he liked what he heard. Yes made their first ever promotional video for the song (albeit one with them simply performing live). The single reached No.7 in the UK charts, no mean feat given bands of their ilk were supposedly under fire from the threat of punk rock

EBET ROBERTS/GETTY IMAGES

at the time. Yet it was another fine example of the fact that, when the mood took them, the progressive legends of the 70s could turn their hand to writing simple but catchy music with aplomb. **JE**

13. OWNER OF A LONELY HEART

90125, 1983

First drafted by Trevor Rabin years previously, Yes' unlikely 80s comeback hit – an American No.1 – was radically reimagined by Trevor Horn, who told a Red Bull Music Academy event in 2011: "I was convinced that if we didn't put loads of whizz bangs and gags all over the verse, nobody would listen to it." It was the producer who persuaded a reluctant band to record it, and Squire modified the music while Anderson added new lyrics. Its overall impact, however, relies on the blend of Rabin's heavy guitar and the Synclavier. Horn's said that Alan White, initially peeved by being displaced by a drum machine, eventually played a part in the programming (and played keyboards). It remains one of Horn's favourite among his own productions, and hip-hop artists have acknowledged that it pioneered the use of a sample as a breakbeat (yep, we're still talking about Yes!). Pushing the album to sales of three million in the US alone, by far their biggest, *Owner*… gave Yes what Chris Squire said was "a phase two audience… What we call our 80s audience." "When I showed them what was possible," Horn revealed, "it was fun to watch them run with it." **CR**

***90125*, 1983.**

12. SOUTH SIDE OF THE SKY

Fragile, 1971

Every so often Yes offered up a reminder that they could do heavy just as well as the Led Zeps and Deep Purples out there when the mood took them – and weave those textures into a bigger, more unorthodox tapestry. "This is a song about climbing mountains," Jon Anderson has said. "It's dangerous, but we all must climb mountains every day." The howling wind that punctuates this eight-minute

World of leather: Yes embrace the 80s.

cornerstone of *Fragile* gives you a clue as to the theme – a failed, ultimately fatal mountaineering mission. But elsewhere there's also a brilliantly impressionistic quality to the music. The knotty tangles of guitar and the insistent trudge of the tempo set the scene in some style, while there's also that climbing pitch to the verse sections and a sense of mounting desperation. But this was also one of the tracks that showcased Rick Wakeman's skill as a player and (uncredited in this case) composer, as his dramatic musical soliloquy, accompanied by Bill Bruford's hesitant jazz percussion, offers a stark, quasi-classical contemplation as a platform for warm harmonies and wistful lonely contemplations of a dying man, reflecting Anderson's earlier counter-intuitive musings on the *'warmth of the sky/of warmth when you die'*. **JS**

11. LONG DISTANCE RUNAROUND

Fragile, 1971

One of the punchiest tracks from *Fragile* was sufficiently concise that it was able to serve as the B-side to the edited *Roundabout* single without the need for any topping and tailing. Despite its economy of length, it's still packed full of bold ideas. It opens with one of Steve Howe's trademark classically flavoured guitar introductions. Then there's a polyrhythm with Bill Bruford accenting every fifth note against the steady 4/4 pulse of the keys, bass, and guitar to lend the verses an off-kilter lilt. The lyrics were born out of Jon Anderson's frustration with religion, growing up in the Christian faith. "It was how religion had seemed to confuse me totally," he told *Songfacts*. "It was such a game that seemed to be played, and I was going around in circles looking for the sound of reality, the sound of God. That was my interpretation of that song, that I was always confused. I could never understand the things that religion stood for. And that throughout the years has always popped its head up in the song I've been working with." A concert staple, the song appears on live releases including *Yessongs*, *The Word Is Live* and *Songs From Tsongas*. **DW**

10. SIBERIAN KHATRU

Close To The Edge, 1972

A mere bagatelle at just under nine minutes, this symphonic masterpiece occupies the second half of *...Edge*'s second side. Jon Anderson brought the bones of *Siberian Khatru* to rehearsals, credited co-writers Howe and Wakeman beefed up the song's main propulsive riffs and sections, and the entire band embellished the arrangement. Anderson uses the image of Siberia to add scale, exoticism and mystery, and his birds of prey, rivers and blue tails root the song in nature. As ever, he sells his oblique, spiritual metaphors with the sheer ebullience of his vocal delivery and irresistible melodies. "The song builds and builds and builds," he said later. "You're taking the audience on an epic adventure. People think it can't get bigger, but it does. A very cool song." As a musical ensemble, Yes purr like a Rolls-Royce engine here: Squire's bass is busy, his harmony and counterpoint vocals crucial. Bill Bruford's drumming is deeply detailed throughout. Howe and Wakeman trade licks across the Advision studio floor: dizzying, eclectic guitars countered by big Mellotron chords; twanging electric sitar parried by stunning harpsichord lines. As with the album, the song is the sound of Yes coming into its own as a unit, and the lexicon of progressive rock gaining form. Bruford left Yes for Crimson that July, his replacement Alan White joining for the world tour that kicked off that same month. That set regularly opened with *Siberian Khatru*, which became a concert staple over the years and features on numerous live recordings. Steve Howe Trio recorded a particularly natty version on their 2010 album, *Travelling*. **GRM**

9. I'VE SEEN ALL GOOD PEOPLE

The Yes Album, 1971

The Yes Album, the first to feature Howe, was where the band truly hit their unique stride. Its highlights are numerous, and *I've Seen All Good People* stands tall as one of their evergreen anthems. At almost seven minutes and two movements long, it opens with *Your Move* (chess as a metaphor for relationships) then ratchets up into the country-rock riffing of the more radio-friendly *All Good People*. (While the first part was a US Top 40 hit, stations soon took to playing the whole thing, so enamoured were they of the later groove.) The a cappella three-part harmony opening features Anderson, Squire and Howe; the climax does complex things with simple chords. Tony Kaye on Hammond organ does what works rather than what shows him off.

The-then highly influential critic Robert Christgau, in *Village Voice,* hailed it as "a great cut" in which Yes' "arty eclecticism comes together". Anderson again pondered the existence of God while dropping in a couple of homages to John Lennon. He shamelessly namechecks *Instant Karma* – *'send that instant karma to me'* – and *Give Peace A Chance*. Recalling the album, he told *Classic Rock*, "It started a new plane for Yes, where we were completely original, creating our own music. When I'd joined, I'd said: 'Isn't it time Yes did the whole thing?' That became one of our key strengths."

Howe, for his part, called this "post-psychedelia". Yes, he told *Prog*, now "stood out because we were quirky, risky and kind of weird... Which is a very good thing." **CR**

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Soundchasers: Yes in 1974, with Patrick Moraz, standing centre.

8. THE GATES OF DELIRIUM

Relayer, 1974

Tales From Topographic Oceans was a hit but divided critics, fans and the band. Rick Wakeman ate his last mid-show curry, and was replaced by Refugee keysman Patrick Moraz. In the gloomy year of the three-day week, double-digit inflation and deadly IRA attacks, Yes repaired to Chris Squire's home studio in Virginia Water, Surrey, and doubled down on the escapist prog/fusion grandeur with *Relayer*. Sprawling over the entire first side, the near 22-minute behemoth *The Gates Of Delirium* was a true statement of intent. Inspired by Tolstoy's *War And Peace*, the song began life as piano sketches from Jon Anderson, with the band pitching in, including Moraz. "[Jon] explained a lot of the conceptualisation," he said later. "He had some of the themes, but nothing was written down." With Moraz on board there's definitely a sense of experimental jazz in parts here. The band, unshackled from studio time restraints, build an ominous sense of conflict, evoke the *Sturm und Drang* of a fierce battle, then linger camera-like over its smouldering aftermath. Later released by Atlantic as a single, *Soon* was the mournful coda to Yes' longest piece until 2011's *Fly From Here*. It was performed in its entirety on the Relayer tour in '74, though Alan White may not be relishing the prospect in 2020. "It was one of the toughest pieces the band ever played," he said recently. "It demands a hell of a lot of energy and precision. I look back on it and I think, 'Oh my God, we were really crazy!'" **GRM**

***Relayer*, 1974.**

7. YOURS IS NO DISGRACE

The Yes Album, 1971

The Yes Album marked the arrival of Steve Howe into the fold and the band kicked off the record with the galloping charge of *Yours Is No Disgrace*, a track that begins with a refrain borrowed from the theme to the TV show *Bonanza*. Despite that pilfered Western bounce, the song shows Yes really pushing themselves compositionally, using a huge dynamic range to build plenty of drama into the music. "The inventiveness of the group, because of its musical potential, started to show," said Howe in a 2003 interview for the *Guitar Heroes* DVD series. "We were trying to formulate, as much as we could, our own style." Howe's guitar solo even lets him dip into Hendrix territory, using his wah-wah pedal to great effect. It was the longest song Yes had recorded by this point in their career, a testament to their orchestral sensibilities and a signpost to where progressive rock was going next.

The lyrics reference the Las Vegas casino Caesar's Palace. "Well, I'd just been to Vegas and it was amazing how crazy the place was and how silly we are," Jon Anderson told *Songfacts* in an interview. "Silly human race. It was something to do with how crazy we can be as a human race to be out there flittering money around and gambling, trying to earn that big payout, when actually that's not what life is truly about. Our life is truly about finding our divine connection with God, if you like. You know, that's why we live." **DW**

6. AWAKEN

Going For The One, 1977

For many Yes fans, 1977's *Going For The One* was the last great creative statement produced by the classic Yes Mk IV line-up, and its crescendo-packed 15-minute final track is its crowning glory. Keyboard player Patrick Moraz took part in early sessions during the album's gestation, and told author Jon Kirkman, "I had already exchanged some of the ideas for *Awaken*," but it's the returning Wakeman's baroque piano parts that open the piece with such a flourish, and towards the end, an extraordinary church organ solo offers a riot of instrumental colour within an otherwise beatific, dreamlike piece. Anderson told *Circus* magazine on its release that the lyric was inspired by Calvin Miller's book *The Singer*, which he was reading while recording the album at Mountain Studios in Montreux, Switzerland. "It's about this *Star Song*, which is an ageless hymn that's sung every now and again," he revealed. Fittingly, then, there's a distinctly hymnal quality to large swathes of the piece and Wakeman actually played the organ in a cathedral near Montreux. The band took advantage of unusually high quality telecommunications in Switzerland to record his part over a landline to the studio. And they make out that "phoning it in" is a bad thing. **JS**

PETE STILL/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Rick Wakeman returns to keys on the Going For The One tour at Wembley Arena, on October 28, 1977.

The Yes Album

***The Yes Album*, 1971.**

5. STARSHIP TROOPER

The Yes Album, 1971

Quite apart from the fact that it's one of Yes's first multi-part, extended song cycles of the kind that would define progressive rock as a genre, there's something truly life-affirming about this nine-and-a-half-minute suite from *The Yes Album*. The robust riff and star-flecked guitar patterns that introduce the song represent such a fine how-d'you-do that it often seems more suited to opening the album rather than closing Side One. Although each of the five members brings a fair amount to the party, it's Chris Squire who delivers the most exceptional contribution. As well as writing the sprightly acoustic folk interlude of *Disillusion* he offers sublime harmonies with Anderson, while the distorted and mutated bass sounds (employing bass tremolo) on the final *Würm* section shows how prepared he was to push the boundaries of his own developing sonic template and really unsettle the listener. Among the fans of this record was a young Trevor Horn, who later told Jon Kirkman: "I'd never heard a bass sound like that before. *Starship Trooper* – I wore the record out."

As for the lyrical themes, talking to website *Songfacts*, Jon Anderson later explained that the *'talks by the water'* section was "interconnected with the realisation that the most peaceful place is down by the lake, down by the river close to water. I think that has something to do with our ancient evolvement as human beings. I know that whenever I sing that, and I sing that at every show, I'm always thinking about my family, my connection with the royal family, the oneness of being." The royal family's thoughts on Jon Anderson and Yes have sadly gone unrecorded, but let's hope they would agree with him that "there are billions of people out there that are all connected on the same level". **JS**

4. ROUNDABOUT

Fragile, 1971

Fragile was the album that helped Yes break out on the international stage, particularly in the US, and its torch-bearing herald was the magnificent *Roundabout*. The edited, 7-inch single version of the song went into the Billboard Top 20, a chart peak that the band wouldn't surpass until the release of *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* in 1983. Steve Howe and Jon Anderson started writing *Roundabout* while on tour in Scotland, sitting in a hotel room. "We seemed to find a lot of time to do that in the 70s," Howe told *Guitar World* in 2014. "We had a private plane. We got to places. People sat by the pool. And Jon and I were in this hotel room, kind of going, 'Well, what have you got that's a bit like this?' We used to quiz one another like that. We did those exchanges in our music, and lyrically as well. This was the era of cassettes, and I've still got all of them – Jon and me fooling around in hotel rooms."

The lyrics were inspired by a drive through Scotland on which Anderson was struck by the profusion of roundabouts [*One can only imagine what he'd have made of Swindon! – Ed.*], but his trippy approach transforms this drab, prosaic subject into something rather marvellous and magical. Rick Wakeman was the newest member of the band, introduced on *Roundabout* by the sound of a piano played backwards on a tape machine, before Howe's classically inspired, baroque guitar paves the way for Squire's wonderfully chunky bassline.

Forty-six years after they recorded it, *Roundabout* was the song the band performed when Yes were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame, with Rush's Geddy Lee filling in for the late Chris Squire on bass. It remains a vital staple of their live sets, one of progressive rock's greatest, most recognisable anthems. **DW**

3. HEART OF THE SUNRISE

Fragile, 1971

With his usual unerring precision, Bill Bruford hit the nail on the head last year when speaking to *Rolling Stone*. "On reflection, the band hit its real template with *Heart Of The Sunrise*. That seemed to have it all. That was a shorter version of what was to become *Close To The Edge*." Clocking in at more than 11 minutes, *Heart Of The Sunrise* closed out *Fragile* and quickly became one of Yes' most enduring and beloved signature pieces. Those opening salvos – tattoos of bass, guitar and snare in relentless lock-step – hurtle towards you like a juggernaut, harking back to the brain and brawn of King Crimson, or to the fizzing intensity of The Who or Cream in their pomp. With Howe's guitar now subdued and shimmering beneath him, Jon Anderson takes the song to the other side of the dynamic spectrum with his lovely, pastoral lyrics: *'Love comes to you and you follow/Lose one on to the heart of the sunrise.'*

"At that time I was exhausted with the city of London," Anderson recalled in 2009. "I wanted to get out of there and live in the country. We just wrote, and the music became about that." Call them fey, call them hippie-dippy, but the sentiment is clear, and there are actually academic theses exploring Anderson's lyrics here, with the city as a symbol of Man's alienation from the natural world. Wakeman was the new boy on *Fragile*, having replaced the apparently synth-sceptical Tony Kaye, and makes his nimble presence quickly felt, notably on the noodly back-and-forth of the mid-section. He has recalled going along for an early rehearsal and the band assembling *Roundabout* and a large part of *Heart Of The Sunrise* too. Given the composition's complexity, that speaks volumes to the band's technical facility in '71. A live staple and fan favourite, *Heart Of The Sunrise* really does have it all. **GRM**

2. AND YOU AND I

Close To The Edge, 1972

Side One is a tough act to follow, but the *Close To The Edge* album refuses to fall off a cliff. *And You And I* keeps the momentum and magic flowing, shaping into a 10-minute, four-movement rock opera. Implausibly, an edit, snipped halfway, was a Top 50 single in the US. A quarter-century later, Joss Whedon, the man behind the *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* movie and television series and the first, all-conquering *Avengers* film, named his production company Mutant Enemy, quoting Jon Anderson's lyrics from the song. This was also, he has said, the name of his typewriter. (There are other sly, oblique references to Yes scattered throughout lifelong-fan Whedon's work.)

While the recording sessions at Advision Studios were reportedly stressful, with Bill Bruford driven to distraction, what ultimately emerged was serene. Led by Anderson and Howe, the band created the album commonly perceived as their masterpiece. *And You And I* began as a folk theme strummed by Anderson, which blossomed outwards, Howe and Wakeman interacting beautifully. Jon claimed its working title was *The Protest Song*. Then again, he told *NME* in '72 that he felt it was hymn-like, and was "secure in the knowledge of knowing there is somebody… God, maybe." In recent years he happily confided to *Prog* that "I was in Heaven, and that still comes off this record," adding that despite disputes and debates the band "were all very connected to each other" and "in love with pushing the envelope".

Anderson's explanations are always nicely nebulous so listeners will read their own meanings into the piece's four sections: *Cord Of Life* ("Okay," announces Howe at the top, pragmatically), the well-paced *Eclipse* (which is reminiscent of Sibelius), *The Preacher, The Teacher* (with Wakeman scorching out a synth solo) and the 40 seconds of *Apocalypse* (chirpier than that sounds). To this day, for all his scepticism, Wakeman plays this live. **CR**

1. CLOSE TO THE EDGE

Close To The Edge, 1972

"I mean, how hilarious is it that Bill Bruford left after *Close To The Edge* because he thought it was too commercial? Ha!" Steve Howe told *Prog* in 2018. "We put the music first. Kept building, kept pushing on to the next story." It's also been said that Bruford left because he thought Yes had now peaked, and couldn't build anything greater. While fans of other albums will disagree, *Close To The Edge* is more often than not cited as the band's musical zenith, with even grumpy old Rick Wakeman calling it their best. "No one has ever come close to it," Trevor Horn has revealed.

Of course the album's altar, its pièce de résistance, is that almost 19-minute title track, which reinvented the notion of a Side One and somehow gave Yes a million-selling Top 5 album on both sides of the Atlantic. Written by Anderson and Howe, who were in something of an imperial phase, its inspirations, said Anderson, included *The Lord Of The Rings* and Sibelius' *Symphony No.6* and *No.7*.

As the pair worked on ideas at Howe's home in Hampstead, it was the guitarist who came up with a variation of the lyrical refrain, *'Close to the edge, down by a river'* (he'd previously lived near the Thames, in Battersea). Anderson then ran with the words and themes, also motivated by Hermann Hesse's novel of self-discovery, *Siddartha* (an influence, too, on Nick Drake's *River Man*). "It's all metaphors," Jon told *MusicRadar*. Its climax seems to sing of not fearing death, no less.

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

Yes, playing at London's Crystal Palace Bowl in September 1972.

***Fragile*, 1971.**

The opening tape loop, of sounds drawn from both nature and keyboards, took two days to record: the loop itself was 40 feet long. Wendy Carlos' highly experimental *Sonic*

Seasonings, regarded by many as the first New Age album, is another source Anderson has referenced, as well as Mahavishnu Orchestra, with whom Yes had toured. As for Wakeman's ominous yet uplifting organ solo, he was playing an idea Howe had originally composed for guitar. Both agreed it sounded better when played on the pipe organ at the St-Giles-without-Cripplegate medieval church in London's Barbican. Awkwardly, Eddy Offord accidentally inserted the wrong take into the mix, binning the agreed best one. Oops.

That said, Offord's splicing was ingenious for its time. He crafted a successful through line amid so many (often conflicting) ebullient ideas, patching together a rich, resonant tapestry. And if in the studio there were inevitable debates, ego clashes and fraught moments, the album captures Yes revelling in a shared ambition – to ignore boundaries, to boldly go.

It may seem rather strange now, but the grandeur and scale of Simon And Garfunkel's *Bridge Over Troubled Water* album was seen as the one to beat. If the American duo had spent 10 weeks recording that, Yes were intent on spending longer on this, as if that was the measure of stature. Their time had come to shine.

"Even if we'd just done that and then stopped," Howe once told *Prog*, "I think people would still be talking about it today." It even got good reviews in its own time, albeit with the *NME* writing, "not just close to the edge, they've gone right over it". Billboard reckoned that Yes had weaved "dainty fragments, glimpses of destinies yet to be formed… transcending the medium", while as recently as 2018, *Rolling Stone* named it the fifth best prog moment ever.

It doesn't want to stop dancing on the edge, and each time you hear it you wonder how they can start at such a high pitch and keep on rising without imploding. That's the beauty of this song, though: it never does topple over that edge. It gets up, but not down. **CR**

Close to the Edge
Yes

***Close To The Edge*, 1972.**

YES TOP 40

1 Close To The Edge
2 And You And I
3 Heart Of The Sunrise
4 Roundabout
5 Starship Trooper
6 Awaken
7 Yours Is No Disgrace
8 The Gates Of Delirium
9 I've Seen All Good People
10 Siberian Khatru
11 Long Distance Runaround
12 South Side Of The Sky
13 Owner Of A Lonely Heart
14 Wonderous Stories
15 Perpetual Change
16 Going For The One
17 The Revealing Science Of God (Dance Of The Dawn)
18 Ritual (Nous Sommes Du Soleil)
19 Turn Of The Century
20 Sound Chaser
21 America
22 Changes
23 Machine Messiah
24 Tempus Fugit
25 To Be Over
26 Parallels
27 Time And A Word
28 It Can Happen
29 Onward
30 On The Silent Wings Of Freedom
31 Don't Kill The Whale
32 Love Will Find A Way
33 Leave it
34 Hold On
35 Endless Dream
36 Mood For A Day
37 Shoot High Aim Low
38 Homeworld (The Ladder)
39 The Fish (Schindleria Praematurus)
40 The Remembering (High The Memory)

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